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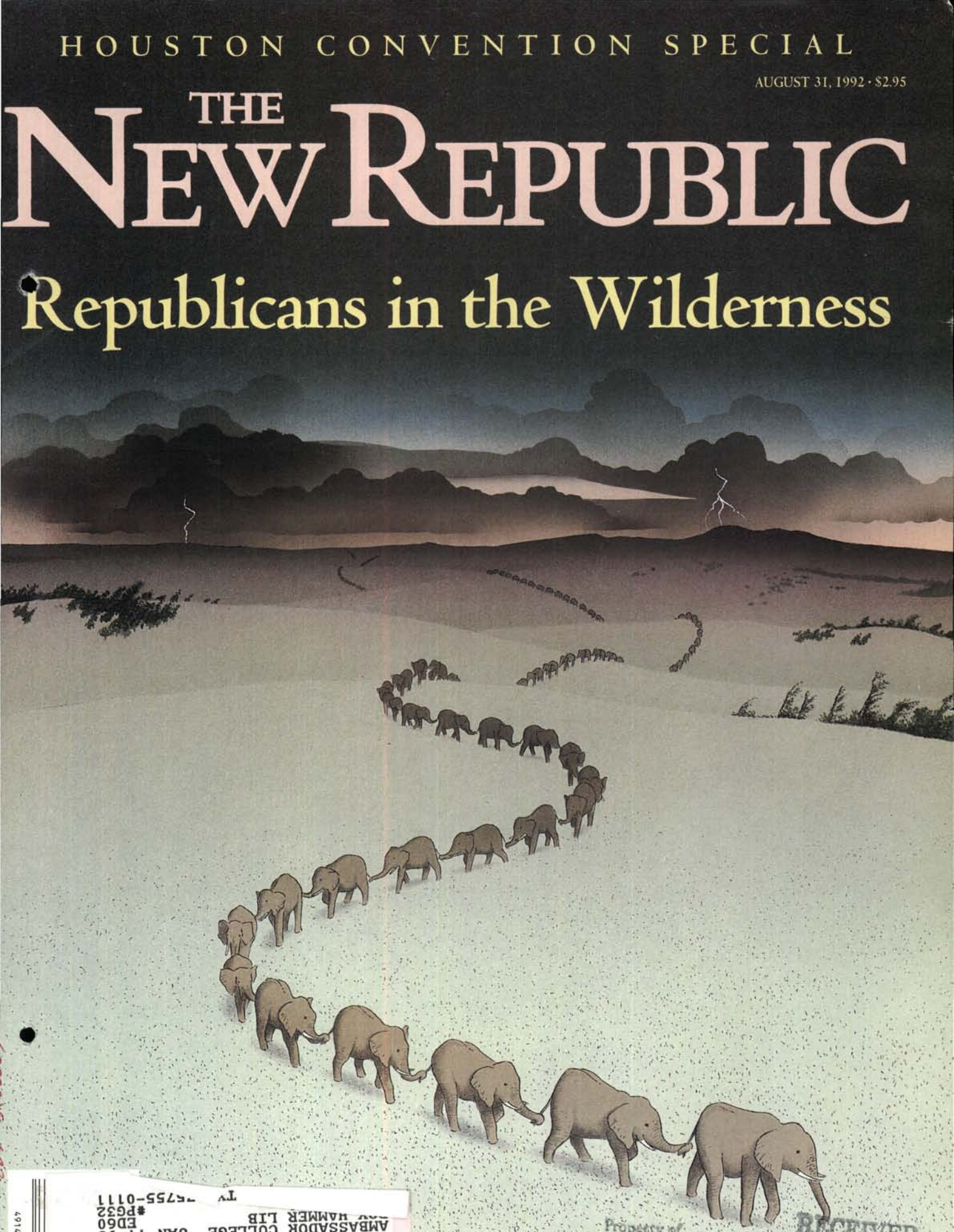
# THE NEW REPUBLIC

## Republicans in the Wilderness



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Recently, Fannie Mae commissioned a landmark National Housing Survey. Over 1,500 homeowners and renters were interviewed by Hart-Teeter Research, and the results provide a very comprehensive overview of Americans' attitudes about homeownership. The survey shows that Americans are willing to make great sacrifices to own a home. By a three to one margin, they'd rather own a home than retire 10 years early; by a four to one margin, they'd rather own some distance from work than rent within easy commuting range; by a four to one margin, they'd rather own than take a better job in a city where they'd have to rent; and by a greater than two to one margin, they're willing to take a second job if that's what it takes to buy a home. What makes owning a home so desirable? A combination of personal, family, and financial security. In spite of recent publicity about falling prices, 78% of those responding think owning a home is still a good investment, while only 2% consider it a bad one. And 77% think their home would sell today for more than they paid for it.

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# SOME IMPORTANT FINDINGS ABOUT THIS HOUSE.

Homeownership is valued most by those who have to struggle to achieve it. "Owning your own home" is an important goal for 60% of those in the lowest income brackets, but only 31% of those in the highest. And more African Americans and Hispanics list homeownership as a primary goal than do whites. Unfortunately, despite the fact that America has one of the highest homeownership rates in the world, the dream is still out of reach for too many. By a three to one margin, people identified the lack of affordable housing as "one of the two or three most serious problems facing the U.S." At Fannie Mae, we're working to help solve that problem.

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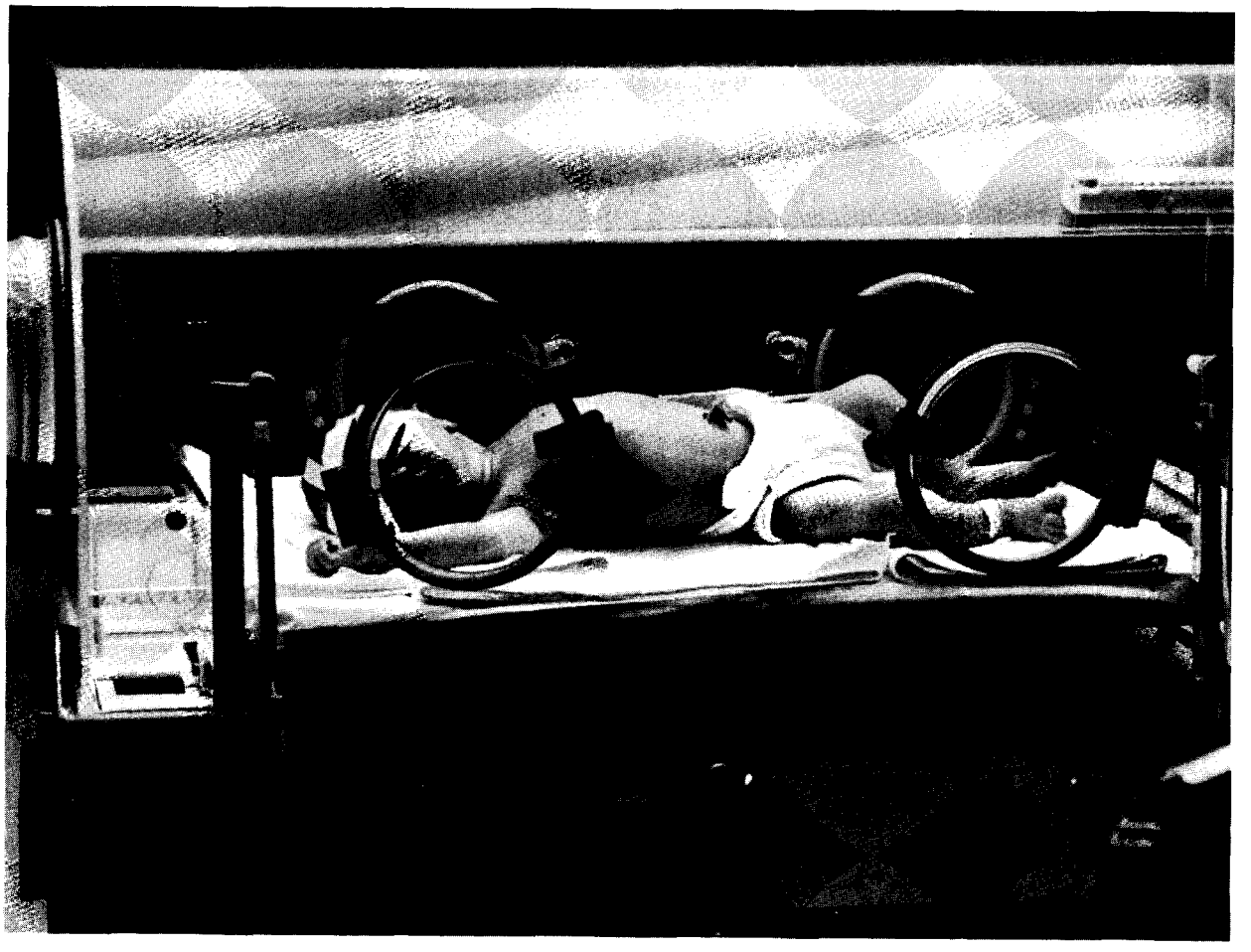

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# THE NEW REPUBLIC

*A Weekly Journal of Opinion*

**AUGUST 31, 1992**

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**ISSUE 4,050**



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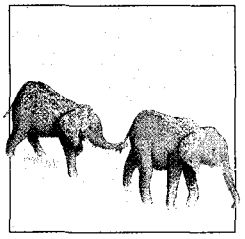

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# CORRESPONDENCE

## Frat boys

**To the editors:**

There is real irony to Mickey Kaus's "Paradigm's Loss" (July 27). It is at least as interesting a question why Kaus (and a number of his TNR colleagues) doggedly remains a Democrat, given the political movement embracing the positions long advocated by Jack Kemp, as why Jim Pinkerton would remain a Republican. The more important issues raised by the essay, however, are the things Kaus omits in his answer to the question of whether the new paradigm idea is "worth preserving."

Most importantly, although Kaus's discussion of Albert O. Hirschman's concepts of "exit" and "voice" is well done, Kaus is wrong to portray the essential newness of the new paradigm as a search for more effective means for the delivery of public services. No doubt the rejection of statism and a preference for a greater reliance on market mechanisms in public policy are a part of the new paradigm. But it is the rejection of moral relativism and a reaffirmation of the central role of public policy and government action in the making and enforcing of common social values that are at the heart of the matter. In other words, the new paradigm is most fundamentally about a new (or rather renewed) set of goals for social policy rather than merely a new set of tools.

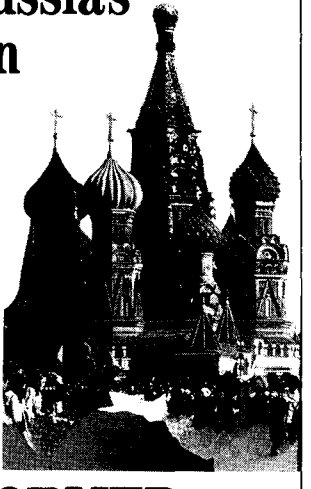
Kaus's own concept of "civic liberalism" and his programmatic prescription for dealing with the multiple pathologies among and flowing from America's urban underclass—replacing welfare with work—are vital contributions to that core of the new paradigm that has nothing to do with the distinction between exit and voice. At that core is the search for a public policy program of "empowerment" with respect to America's most pressing social problems, in contrast to both of the failed old paradigms of "entitlement" and "abandonment."

Witness all the talk—yes, in both parties—about restoring a sense of "community" and about each citizen's "responsibility." In other words, whereas conservatives have historically emphasized the value of liberty and liberals have traditionally pursued, above all else, equality (generally defined as economic equality), NPers have set about to construct a set of public policies aimed at the long-neglected value of fraternity.

CRAIG SNYDER
*Philadelphia, Pennsylvania*


**The real meaning of Russia's second great revolution**

Fortuitously, James H. Billington, the Librarian of Congress and one of the West's most distinguished Russian scholars, found himself in Moscow during the failed coup of August 1991. A uniquely informed and perceptive eyewitness, Billington here draws on the people and incidents he observed, as well as on his profound understanding and love of the Russian people, to analyze the significance of an event he believes was equal to, if not greater than, the Bolshevik revolution of October 1917. However, as he eloquently shows, *this* breakthrough was a spiritual renewal which holds out a genuine promise of freedom and redemption after Russia's long nightmare of autocracy and totalitarianism.



**RUSSIA TRANSFORMED: BREAKTHROUGH TO HOPE**

*MOSCOW, AUGUST 1991*

**By James H. Billington**

"STIRRING, PERCEPTIVE."—*Publishers Weekly*

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## Fighting thoughts

**To the editors:**

We disagree that "it is a good thing" that hate crime laws across the country have been called into question ("Speech Therapy," July 13 & 20).

Ten years ago the Anti-Defamation League developed a model statute that extends the routine criminal law sentencing concept of penalty enhancement to bias-motivated crimes. More than thirty states have since adopted the ADL's format, which differs greatly from the flawed St. Paul ordinance the Court rejected as unconstitutional. Enhanced penalties for hate crimes are appropriate when individuals or institutions are targeted because of their race, religion, sexual orientation, or national origin. These crimes have a profound impact not just on the victim, but on every member of the victim's community. But for the prejudice, in most situations there would be no inducement to act at all—the crime itself would not occur.

In the St. Paul case, Justice Scalia's opinion denounced content-based restrictions on speech. Nothing in the Court's opinion, however, suggests that illegal *conduct*, motivated by hatred targeted at certain persons or groups because of their race, religion, sexual orientation, or national origin, is beyond state regulation.

JESS N. HORDES,
MICHAEL LIEBERMAN
*Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith*
*Washington, D.C.*

**To the editors:**

Amen to your remark, in criticism of the "fighting words" doctrine, that "it is absurd to assume that even face-to-face epithets are likely to provoke any reasonable person to reflexive violence." It's high time that public discourse began to recognize the influence (and, to an underestimated extent, control) that the intellect exercises over the emotions, the latter of which are unduly celebrated in our anti-intellectual, anti-elite, pro-ethnicity, post-feminist era. Psychologists have begun to chart the cognitive causes and components of emotions; mainstream public policy analysis and culture criticism need to pick up this theme.

Its relevance extends beyond the fighting words issue, to rape (particu-



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larly date rape), where some feminists are in effect trying to pressure victims to experience greater and longer-lasting emotional pain than they now do; abortion, where right-to-lifers attempt to do the same thing with women who have had or are contemplating abortions; the pervasive violence in our society, which is encouraged by the constant exaltation of the passions and denigration or disregard of rational self-control; the divorce rate, which is elevated by the pervasive depiction of love as a mysterious bolt of emotion over which the intellect has no influence; and even international affairs, where too little is demanded of governments in the way of using argument and reason to erode existing hatreds against neighboring peoples.

LAWRENCE A. BEYER
*New Haven, Connecticut*

## Sterile

**To the editors:**

In "Tissue Issue" (June 29), Robert Bazell made a number of errors concerning the moratorium on the use of federal funds for fetal transplantation research involving tissue from induced abortions. The most egregious error is his assumption that the moratorium covers all fetal tissue transplantation research. The moratorium applies only to federal support for research using fetal tissue from *induced* abortions for transplantation into humans. It does not prohibit federal support for transplantation research involving tissue obtained from tubal pregnancies or miscarriages or for transplantation of human fetal tissue into animals, or private funding of any human fetal tissue transplant research.

Since Bazell's article appeared, Congress has upheld President Bush's veto of an attempt to overturn the federal moratorium, and we are proceeding to establish a fetal tissue bank that will make available sterile and genetically normal tissue from tubal pregnancies and spontaneous abortions in amounts that can meet the current research needs.

JAMES MASON
*Assistant Secretary for Health*
*Washington, D.C.*

**Robert Bazell replies:**

Of course the administration's ban applies only to induced abortions. Abortion, not medicine, is what the ban is about. My article discussed the administration's effort to set up a bank of tissue from miscarriages and ectopic pregnancies, an effort most scientists regard as futile.

## House rules

**To the editors:**

Fred Barnes ("They're Back!" August 3) leaves the impression that Freedom House is involved in "recruiting for the Clinton campaign." During the twelve presidential elections since our founding in 1941, Freedom House has never endorsed a presidential candidate. Wendell Willkie and Eleanor Roosevelt founded Freedom House as a united front to oppose totalitarianism and promote democracy. Today our trustees are an ideologically diverse group of individuals—including Andrew Young and Jeane Kirkpatrick—united only in their concern for human rights and democracy. Individuals in our organization will

undoubtedly endorse different candidates in the current political season, but, as always, Freedom House will remain staunchly non-partisan. All we ask is for people to vote.

R. BRUCE MCCOLM
*Executive Director, Freedom House*
*New York, New York*

## Anti-anti-Catholic

**To the editors:**

I was puzzled by the letters under "Anti-Catholic" (Correspondence, August 3). Had I somehow missed a vicious anti-Catholic slant in the article "Like a Prayer" (by Adelle-Marie Stan, July 6)? No; when I re-read it, the same tears welled up.

I have also walked in both camps, as a godfather at the baptism of a Catholic infant two weeks ago and as an official in a local chapter of a pro-choice organization before that. Stan's article was a uniquely successful effort to capture the essence of the misunderstood pain and anger that drive abortion activists on both sides.

The test of the letters confirms this. Chris King is surprised that calling someone a murderer provokes an angry response. Teresa E. Kneuler found Stan's introspective journey ("As a child, I loved the rosary ... the gentle prayers would lull me") a "pointedly cruel ... inventory of Catholic clichés. Her tone was mocking."

Pro-life activists will never understand the cruelty they inflict on hapless young women until those activists learn to grapple with their own pain instead. Pro-choice activists will never be able to respond without anger to pro-life attacks until those activists grasp the anguish that flourishes abused and unchecked in both. If there is a place to begin a successful dialogue in this conflict, this is it.

FRANK C. EDWARDS III
*Dallas, Texas*

## Hearing voices

**To the editors:**

I was glad to see Jacob Weisberg's article on Nodar Djin's whistle-blowing case against the Voice of America ("Citizen Djin," June 15). My client Carolyn Weaver reported in the *Columbia Journalism Review* several instances of apparent covert signals sent through VOA programs, as well as evidence of other political interference. VOA has never denied or explained the incidents she reported.

At the same time, she challenged in federal court an agency regulation requiring her as a VOA employee to submit for prior review any outside writing touching upon foreign policy. The regulation is more restrictive than that applied to former CIA agents. The suit is presently pending before Federal District Judge Thomas Penfield Jackson. Merely for failing to submit her article for prior review to agency censors, Weaver was reprimanded and warned that she would face escalating penalties should she violate the rule again.

It is disheartening when the VOA engages in censorship activities reminiscent of recently fallen dictatorships. It seems that officials in the Bush and Reagan administrations have succeeded in having it both ways. For public consumption they promote the VOA as an impartial international news agency. Privately, they have been willing to subvert it.

STEPHEN M. KOHN
*National Whistleblower Center*
*Washington, D.C.*



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# TRB®
## FROM WASHINGTON

# Taxonomy

"[Massachusetts Governor William] Weld repeatedly referred to the 43 tax increases Clinton signed during 11 years as governor." —*USA Today*, July 7

"Bill Clinton as governor of Arkansas raised taxes something like 128 different times." —Vice President Dan Quayle, July 23

"Well, take taxes. We're mad at George Bush because he raised taxes once. Bill Clinton has signed 121 tax increases. A hundred and twenty-one!" —Representative Newt Gingrich, July 30

Like Joe McCarthy counting Communists in the State Department, Republicans had a hard time deciding exactly how many tax increases to accuse Bill Clinton of. They have settled on the number 128, and the Bush-Quayle campaign has issued a list. The list accompanies a press release featuring the infantile snideness deputy campaign manager Mary Matalin brings to all her literary efforts on behalf of the president of the United States. It accuses Clinton of being "the Pinocchio of this political season ... an arsonist posing as a fire fighter ..." etc.

The exact number of tax increases in Arkansas while Clinton was governor is a meaningless question in any event, but the Republicans obviously think it's a telling point. As McCarthy understood, a number lends phony precision that gives weight to the general indictment—in this case, that Clinton is a "tax raiser." So the accuracy of the number is important, not for what it says about Clinton but for what it says about Bush. Bush has decided to campaign on the theme of "trust." Bear with me while we analyze the "128 tax increases," and see if you can trust anything Bush or his campaign says or does.

The Bush-Quayle list is hilariously shoddy. My favorite items are three (Nos. 31, 86, and 91) that aren't items at all. They are just places where the description of an alleged tax increase took more than one line. Similarly, No. 78 is a verbatim repetition of No. 74 (a 25-cent tax increase per gallon on "light wine").

This list of 128 derives from a list of "120" alleged Clinton tax increases put out by his 1990 Republican rival for governor, Sheffield Nelson. The Bush-Quayle people were wise enough to leave off a few choice items such as a $250 fine added to the sentence for drug offenders, which Nelson chose to define as a tax increase. But the Bush-Quayle "tax increase" list does include (No. 92) a $1-per-conviction court costs fee imposed on convicted criminals. One dollar, and the Bushies are complaining! These people are supposed to be tough on crime?

Item No. 46 is a 1987 law lengthening the season for dog racing. This is apparently a "tax increase" on the theory that a longer season increases state gambling tax revenues. No. 48 is a $500 license fee for abortion clinics. Does the GOP really object to this burden on commerce? Other supposed tax increases either never actually took effect (No. 71) or replaced another tax of equal size (No. 117). A fuel tax increase is counted as two because it applies to both gasoline and diesel. A general booze tax increase weighs in at *five* if you count categories like wine coolers separately—as they do.

Dick Alexander, an Arkansas law professor working for the Clinton campaign, figures a true count would be 55 or 59 increases in various taxes and fees while Clinton was governor, depending on how you figure. He's so honest he includes 10 that the Republicans somehow overlooked.

But in the real world, as opposed to Republican propaganda fantasies, taxes are adjusted up and down all the time. Alexander has produced a list of 48 Clinton tax *cuts* during his governorship. These include such George Bush favorites as a tax credit for businesses hiring employees in enterprise zones and a tax break for capital gains. They also include a general cut last year that reduced or eliminated income taxes on 374,000 low-income Arkansas citizens. Since, according to Alexander, seven of Clinton's 55 (or 59) tax increases have expired or been repealed, the actual number of tax "increases" and the number of tax "cuts" are about equal. If you care.

Arkansas is a very low tax state. It ranks 49th in per capita state and local taxes and 50th in per capita expenditures. Of course Arkansas is also a very poor state. But even measuring taxes as a share of personal income, Arkansas

*continued on page 49*

▲WHY do East Asian immigrants perform so well in America?

▲WHY are two-thirds of America's black population middle class — while one-third remains in the ghetto?

▲WHY do Hispanic Americans acculturate more slowly than most other immigrant groups?

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AUGUST 31, 1992

# THE WILDERNESS YEAR

It's parchingly hot in Houston, and the Republican thirst is becoming a little maddening. Mirages appear on the postmodern skyline—erupting bimbos, soothing Bakers, neo-Noonan punch lines—all invoking the glide to victory that Republicans have taken for granted in the recent past. There will doubtless be some relief, some post-convention rebound, but still a triumphant fall campaign remains the biggest mirage of all. Republicans had better get used to the fact that in all probability they are going to lose.

Many will be tempted to argue that this is the inevitable result of four years of George Bush, and we are inclined to agree with them. With perverse dexterity, the president has abandoned virtually every Republican weapon. He acceded to a hike in taxation, which was smart enough in its recognition that the deficit mattered, but not brave enough to make a clear difference. He has so bungled foreign policy that the Democrats can now credibly claim that the Republicans are not stirred by the moral and strategic sense that guides successful American statecraft; in China, in Iraq, and now in Bosnia, Bush has failed the critical tests. He has witnessed the implosion of the underclass and the explosion of our inner cities (he has seen the desolation of South-Central L.A. with his own eyes), and has had nothing to say. When he does open his mouth, meandering, embarrassing cynicism tends to dribble out.

But the mediocre presidency of George Bush has also been a reflection of a deeper Republican crisis. As John B. Judis details in these pages, the conservative movement that galvanized a fractured Republicanism in the 1950s is clearly entering its death throes. For a time, it seemed as if the political wizardry of Ronald Reagan could have sustained it indefinitely, but the dauphin turned out to be a degenerate, the court grew restive, and the country saw upstart pretenders elsewhere. The alliance among libertarians, fundamentalists, evangelicals, supply-siders, bubbas, neoconservatives, New Paradigmers, and country clubbers could not last long, especially when its own aura of economic success and political invulnerability had worn off.

The Democrats, for their part, recognized the danger of their own obsolescence first. To be sure, the process is not yet complete; there are worrying signs of creeping Carterism in Clinton's economic and foreign policy advisers. But Clinton's emergence around a reconstructed Democratic center—so starkly orchestrated in New York—was a sign that history has at last been digested in a few Democratic minds; that the right lessons of Reaganism have been absorbed, not the wrong ones. And the lesson that Republicans should learn from Clinton's success is not the easy one (that Atwaterism has been learned by the enemy), but the hard one: that political parties are regenerated only by attention to ideas.

Bush, of course, is incapable of this. He would not recognize an idea if it were right under his golf club. But others are not so intellectually feckless, and they are present in Houston. Governor William Weld of Massachusetts in particular offers a Republican synthesis that forms a useful counterpart to Clinton. It presents the Republicans as the party of lower taxes *and* lower social spending. It recognizes that the failing of Reaganism was its governing laziness, its supply-side whimsy, its refusal to scale back the role of government efficiently. Weld's own record of fiscal draconianism in his state, though not perfect, is in tune with the needs of the debt-ridden nation at large. It is also free of the reactionary dogma of the fundamentalist right. Its conservatism does not chant the mantra of "family values" as a code for distaste for the complex nature of contemporary America. While acknowledging the moral trauma of abortion, it favors its legality; while admiring the traditional family, it seeks recognition of gay Americans as equal citizens. It opposes affirmative action, and shows signs of engagement with the nightmare of our inner cities. Unlike Bush, who remains content to invoke the deficit as an excuse for the absence of a social policy, Weld seems to accept that an active social policy—in education, housing, and the cities—is a central concern of properly conservative government.

Republicans deserve better in 1992 from their leadership than a failed (or worse, a successful) replay of 1988. They deserve better than the pretense of government as a replacement for government; than the mischief of a budget always faked into balance; than an insipid view of the American family circa 1953; than a philosophy of jurisprudence that offers the likes of Kennedy and Thomas (rather than, say, Epstein and Posner) as its interpreters of the Constitution; than a wan social policy inspired only and always by crass political calculation. The historic frustration of this election is that a reconstructed conservatism will not do battle with a regenerated liberalism. We will have to wait for 1996 for the future to begin. •



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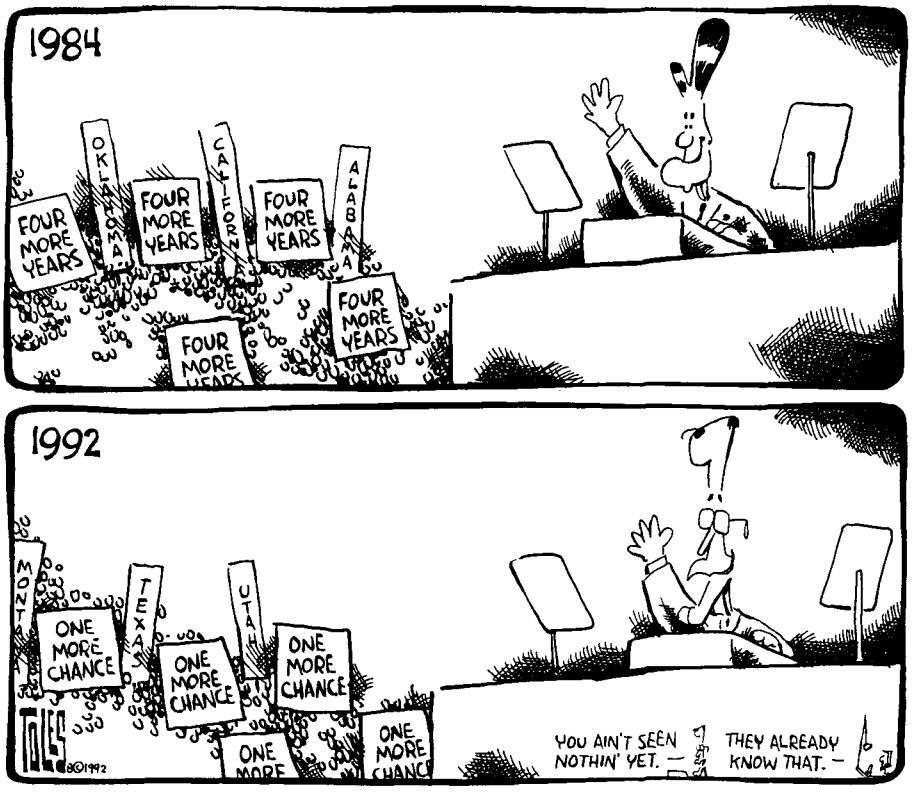
# NOTEBOOK

**B**USHISM CONVENTION BONANZA: "Look, look, there's Kahane protesting on the boat. I thought this guy was kind of dead." —pointing out protesters loyal to the late Meir Kahane to Yitzhak Rabin, Kennebunkport, August 10

"It is absolutely essential—whatever is going on there—that there be open inspection and that humane treatment of the people in these concentration camps be guaranteed." —briefing reporters in Colorado Springs, Colorado, August 6
(thanks to Darin Kinzer, Washington, D.C.)




"Judy, listen, why should I say something nice about a man I like, which I do? But, listen, he's not without redemption.... But in terms of personal kind of guy, nice fellow." —describing his feelings about Bill Clinton, at a meeting with *USA Today* editors, August 4

"Well, it was—you could just sense it. And—a couple of things: one, the enthusiasm, and secondly, the president's coming out swinging. He's going to fight. He wants to take our message to the people. Entirely different. Well, the campaign hasn't had this because I made this decision, stay back and stay out of the criticism fray that the Democrats have been in for six months. So that'll change. That'll all change. This is the inside stuff—who's making the decision on that. I've got confidence in them." —talking about campaign strategy, *ibid.*

**B**UFFALO BILL: Bill Clinton can't seem to make up his mind about the Mexican free trade agreement. During the primaries, he positioned himself as a free trader in contrast to protectionists Jerry Brown and Tom Harkin. In a speech touted by aides as evidence of his independence from special interests, Clinton told the United Autoworkers convention on June 15, "We have to have agreements with our neighbors that favor expanded trade." But now Clinton appears to be hedging his bets, appeasing the Gephardt wing of the party without quite opposing the agreement. On July 27 he called for a rejection of the "outdated rhetoric" of both free traders and protectionists, promoting the need for a "new course," whatever that might mean. And last week he appeared to be on the verge of formally opposing the Bush plan, citing environmental and labor concerns. This issue is a crucial test for Clinton: he can go the way of past Democratic nominees and pander to the union vote, or he can tell the unions to go stuff it. We'll be watching.

**G**EE, THANKS: "The debate between the school administration [in the District of Columbia] and its teachers over the extra school time has mirrored one among educators and researchers nationally. Some specialists say the value of the longer day depends on what local educators choose to do with the time." —*The Washington Post*, July 29

**C**LINTON SUCK-UP WATCH: Now that it looks as though Bill actually might win, readers are invited to submit prize exhibits in craven sycophancy toward the governor of Arkansas (TNR editors and their families are, we regret to say, exempt from this competition). This week's winner is David Maraniss of *The Washington Post*, who followed the Democrats on their bus trip to Hannibal, Missouri, on August 5: "It was Bill and Al and Tipper and Hillary moving in succession, ten feet apart, along a 400-foot rope line, each member of the team displaying a unique style: Bill finding every grasping hand reaching out to him, calling every little girl pretty, his mouth agape in wonder; Al coming in behind him, with the firmer handshake, ever willing to stop a bit longer and talk; then



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Tipper, buoyant and alive, ready to pose for pictures, or take them; and finally Hillary, always saying thank you."

THE REAL GEORGE: When George Bush actually says something he believes in, it's remarkable how eloquent he sounds. His response to the idiot culture's inquiry into his private life was suitably dismissive: "I'm not going to take any sleaze questions. I gave you a little warning. You see, you're perpetuating the sleaze even by asking the question, to say nothing of asking it in the Oval Office," he told an uppity Stone Phillips of NBC News. And Bush's response to the question of his granddaughter's hypothetical abortion, while not grammatical, was also eerily coherent: "But do I, would I, support my child? I'd put my arm around her and say, if she were trying to make that decision, encourage her not to do that, but of course, I'd stand by my child. I'd love her and help her, lift her up, wipe the tears away, and we'd get back in the game." The question is why these admirable statements from George Bush the man never find their way into the politics of George Bush the president.

THE PROD: When Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait, it was Mrs. Thatcher who twisted George's arm to act against the aggressor. "Remember George, this is no time to go wobbly," she told him at a meeting in Aspen. Now she's at it again. "Ethnic cleansing," she wrote in *The New York Times*, "is a term that combines the barbarities of Hitler's [policies] and Stalin's policies toward other nations." Thatcher says that being "wobbly" on the Bosnian crisis will only encourage the Serbs to more slaughter. She's right. Pity she has long since lost all credibility with Mr. Major.

UNDER THE BRIDGE: In an article on Ross Perot (July 6), TNR, relying on a paper from the National League of Families of American Prisoners and Missing in Southeast Asia, stated that Scott Barnes had falsely claimed to be an ex-Green Beret and to have swum the river between Thailand and Cambodia, a river that we said does not exist. THE NEW REPUBLIC had no other verification that Mr. Barnes claimed to have been a Green Beret; and although there is no single river on the Thai-Cambodian border, there are several minor ones Mr. Barnes could have swum.

TEAM NEWS: We're pleased to announce the publication of a new book by our contributing editor John B. Judis: *Grand Illusion: Critics and Champions of the American Century* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux). His article on the demise of the conservative movement appears on page 28. We're also delighted to say that Eric Baker is joining us as our design coordinator. Eric has been the creative force behind several of our more striking recent covers, and we're glad to say he'll be watching over our aesthetics in the months to come. •

## THE SHRUB FILE

# GETTYSBUSH

*By Douglas G. McGrath*

*Friday, August 14, 1992*

With even Republicans hoping he'll quit, the Shrub knows he has to give the speech of his life next week. He came out of personal quarters tonight to read the speech to me and Agent Banks. He said it was hard to write at first, but then he remembered that Lincoln once gave an address "that sure made *him* popular," so he adapted it. Sort of.

"Something like eighty-plus years ago, maybe even a splash on the upside of ninety—hey, we Bushes aren't much for dates, I mean I just, we just, history class was just before ball practice and sometimes, *mind on the game*, wasn't always involved in the date-retaining routine. Put it this way: *a while back*, our forefathers, after getting the stiff-arm, a *total rebuff*, from that George the Third crowd, came up with out here a totally new setup nation-and-human-rights-wise.

"You often hear me talk about—I always, I often—I often always tell Bar and the grands about—as well as everybody else and whoever and Bar, of course—about the 'family of nations.' That's that thing we were trying to bring Saddam into by selling him advanced nuclear technology. And but back when our country here was just a little shaver—back, way back—that family of nations was a pretty rough group of—no G-7 group, I can sure—well, say it like this: you're talking about a *Manson family* kind of thing, if you know what I—where you, where people really had to use their elbows at that economic table if they wanted to get a piece of that new world pie. Each for his own and an eye for an eye kind of deal.

"Then we came along, not Bar and I exactly, but the whole U.S. Revolutionary War team—and so—and so we—and so this place was liberty-conceived and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal or whatever. Now we are a civil-war-wrapped-up kind of people, and we're being tested—not by the Big Brown one down there in Panama and not, but not, and but not by that Butcher of Baghdad, no, but instead, and



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but instead, getting back to the test, we're testing whether that nation, the one I was talking about back up there a few lines up, check your transcripts, whether that nation, or for heaven's sake, *any* nation so thought-up the way we were—'conceived' if you want to use one of those marvelous Harvard Boutique verbs—can hang in there for the long haul without everybody heartburning around about it.

"And so now we're taking a meeting on a great battlefield of that war. Lost a lot of kids. Even one kid is a lot of kids and we lost a lot more than that one, whoever he was. Good kids, good, good young men and—not criticizing the kids, hey, no, not in a—*no kid-criticizer, me.* It's just a lot of 'em couldn't keep their snorkels above water, war-wise. Couldn't do it. Had to die. But let's not churn around about it. Yeah, no. Let's be forward-lookers.

"Now, we have come to dedicate a chunk of this field up here over there as a place where they could hit the hay for the last time. It is altogether prudent that we do this. But in a larger sense—talking Big Picture now—we can't dedicate, we can't consummate, we can't—no, I mean, whoa, little doggies! *No language maven am I!* Meant to say can't *consecrate*—or even hallow this ground. Message: 'No ground-hallowing allowed!' Let me help you with why. Those brave kids, the ones who are still living kids and the others who took it in the neck or the heart or whatever and are thus now *former* kids, it's them or it's they who—well, punch it into your computers like this: it's they and them who have consummated this ground far above our poor power to add or unadd.

"The world will little note nor long remember what we say here, unlike that 'Read My Lips' thing that everybody still runs on the evening news show practically every two minutes practically. But it can never forget what those kids did before they got ripcorded. Instead, it is for us the undead to sign up, like a thousand points of—oh, better gun myself down on that one or that lady with the big hair from Texas will start chucking spears at me again.

"Let's flip it: What this country must do is unleash ourselves like a couple of pitbulls on the numero uno task remaining before us and let me just, I'll just, I'll just tell you *with laser-like specificity* what it is: that from these previously living kids, we take increased stick-to-it-ness to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of, of, whatever you'd, *you know.* So, please, American people, we hear you. *Message received.* Got it, wrote it on a little Post-It, look at it every day. And I give you the Bush word that those dead out there shall not have died in vain, and that this nation, the one I've been talking about for the last whatever it's been, that this country shall, under God, keep giving birth to that little baby named 'freedom' in the maternity ward that is the United States, without fear of being aborted or yanked out of its incubator.

"And—watch out! Here's where we unleash the catchy part—and that government *of* the people is—it's—it's also traditionally in a *by-the*-and-*for-the*-people mode. And so that's, at this juncture, that's the way I visualize how to turn this deal into a real opportunity situation—end result: nobody's churning around about the aftermaths of it so that this marvelous whatever you'd call it that we've got shall not perish from the earth. Put it this way: I want to be the Of-the-For-the-and-By-the-People President."

This was the end. We didn't have to tell the Shrub what we thought since Mrs. Shrub came out, her face kind of blue. She had been eating one of those frozen rolls of chocolate chip cookie dough and was choking. Good break for me and Banks, because we agreed that if the Shrub is counting on a speech to save his career, we'd better start thinking up the code name for Clinton.

DOUGLAS G. MCGRATH is a playwright and screenwriter.

**A murder in Managua.**

# ROADKILL

*By Anna Husarska*

MANAGUA

Blueprints usually don't provoke goose bumps. This one does. It is a big diagram, two feet by four. At the bottom is a plan (a road, trees, houses) that looks like a landscaper's sketch: it represents the scene of the crime. In the upper right corner are technical drawings of a Mitsubishi—all four sides plus an aerial view. The little arrows numbered one through twenty pointing to different parts of the car might be mistaken for an advertisement of state-of-the-art features. In fact they indicate the bullet holes.

The man who shows me the blueprint speaks perfect English, wears an Oxford shirt, and could be a foreigner visiting Nicaragua. He has a boyish face, small, feminine hands, and a piercing sadness in his eyes. He is Raymond Genie, the father of the victim, who was his only child. In a matter-of-fact voice Raymond explains that the blueprint, prepared by the Venezuelan Ministry of Justice at the invitation of the Nicaraguan National Assembly, illustrates what happened on the evening of Sunday, October 28, 1990. The legend to the site plan couldn't be more explicit:

> 1) road of the caravan of escorts belonging to [Nicaraguan Army chief and former Sandinista Defense Minister] General Humberto Ortega Saavedra.



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# Cincinnati's Smart Trade

BY ALBERT SHANKER, PRESIDENT OF THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS

In the national debate over education, President Bush has taken the position that the U.S. spends as much as other industrialized nations—and maybe even more. He's partly right but mostly wrong. The U.S. does spend about the same amount of money on *education* as other industrialized nations—that is on elementary, secondary and higher education. However, a much higher percentage of students in the U.S. go on to college, and the costs of postsecondary education are higher here. So we spend a smaller percentage of our education budget on elementary and secondary education than these other countries.

But there is another way in which we spend less. Less of the money that is spent on elementary and secondary education actually reaches students in the form of teachers, guidance counselors and textbooks. That is because the U.S. has a larger school bureaucracy: There are many more people in district offices and offices within schools who are not directly working with children. If we could reduce the bureaucratic cost, we could go at least part of the way toward spending as much on elementary and secondary education as other industrialized nations.

**Cuts in administrative personnel will save Cincinnati schools $16 million in the next two years.**

The trouble is, when someone proposes that a school district cut the number of school administrators, there's usually a lot of yelling and screaming: "How can we operate the schools without all our administrators?" But a couple of months ago, the Cincinnati school district took the unusual step of drastically cutting its central office staff. Its superintendent, Michael Brandt, following the suggestions of a report from Cincinnati's business community, announced that the school district would be totally reorganized and the number of administrators in the central office reduced from 127 to 62.

As a result of these and other cuts in administrative personnel, the Cincinnati school district will save $16 million over the next two years, and this money will be put back into the schools. Supporters of the cutback say that, in addition to saving money, it will make Cincinnati's school system operate more efficiently than it does now and will allow the system to take some significant steps toward improving its schools.

Cincinnati's reorganization has untangled the chain of command and gotten rid of several layers of bureaucracy. Many of the make-work rules and regulations will be gone, along with the bureaucrats who administered them. At the same time, site-based management—which is also part of the reorganization—means that individual schools can take over their day-to-day operations instead of having to wait for directives from on high.

The Cincinnati reorganization shows how much help businesses can be to local schools when they take on an appropriate role. A commission of local leaders, headed by Clement Buenger, the retired CEO of the Fifth Third Bancorp, a local bank with a reputation for being very well managed, sat together for 18 months. Besides their expertise in organization and management, they brought their own experience of tough times—several local corporations had had to downsize their head offices during the 1980s in order to survive. And because people perceived them as objective, they could be pretty sure their recommendations would be favorably received.

Teacher union president Tom Mooney says that teachers had been complaining about the top-heavy administration for a long time—especially when the former superintendent responded to a financial crisis by trying to make all the cuts from teachers' jobs. But they would never have dared to ask for cuts as deep as the ones just announced "because no one would have listened to us." It took the business community report to make the point so that people would listen.

What will the school district do with the money it's going to save? The teachers' union hopes a chunk of it will go into paying for an in-school suspension program. Discipline is a major problem for many urban school systems, and Cincinnati faces it too. One or two kids who are troublemakers can create an atmosphere that makes it impossible for an entire class to learn. Putting them out on the street isn't the answer either—for them or the community. But in-school suspension programs cost money. Now, the union hopes, the money will be available.

The people in Cincinnati know that freeing teachers and principals from the administrative quagmire in the central office is not going to remake Cincinnati's schools overnight. When people are used to waiting for orders or following rules and regulations, they don't automatically change the way they act merely because the rules are gone. In fact, they are likely to go on doing just what they've always done. It takes time and effort to learn how to come up with new ideas and to get the courage to try them out—to transform what Tom Mooney calls a "bureaucratic culture" into a "professional culture." But they are ready to try.

The people in the Cincinnati schools have made a smart trade: In exchange for administrators they did not need, they've gotten money for programs they would otherwise have been unable to afford. And they've gotten a freedom from bureaucracy they plan to put to good use. It's a trade that school districts all over the country ought to be considering.

MR. SHANKER'S COMMENTS APPEAR IN THIS AD UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS. READER CORRESPONDENCE IS INVITED. ADDRESS YOUR LETTERS TO MR. SHANKER AT THE AFT, 555 NEW JERSEY AVE., N.W., WASHINGTON, DC 20001. ©1992 BY ALBERT SHANKER.

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2) road of the car Mitsubishi number plates MW 3612 driven by Jean Paul Genie.
3) place where Jean Paul Genie is ready to pass the caravan.
4) place where the members of the caravan of escorts perform shots (series) with machine guns (AK-47) in the direction of the car driven by Jean Paul Genie ...

In other words, he was killed for overtaking the motorcade.

All Nicaraguans know the face of the 16-year-old Jean Paul because his photo appears every day on page three of *La Prensa*. One month after the murder, his father, a wealthy pharmaceutical manufacturer, placed an ad saying: "It has been 30 days since I was assassinated. Where is justice?—Jean Paul Genie" As of this writing, the day count in the ad is 652, and justice has not yet been done.

In a country where 30,000 people died in eight years of civil war, the death of one boy could look banal. There have been other killings in the past of innocent people who came too close to a comandante, but none of them provoked much outcry. A young man was gunned down in 1983 by an escort of Comandante Carlos Nuñez—then president of the National Assembly—for the same unreasonable reason as Jean Paul. Nuñez apologized, and the guard stayed on duty.

So why has this murder become a cause célèbre? First, because it occurred eight months after the Sandinistas were defeated in democratic elections, an event that gave Nicaraguans reason to hope that the comandantes would stop running the country like their private fiefdom. And they didn't. The second reason, particularly embarrassing for the government of Violeta Chamorro, is that the man accused of covering up the crime is the highest-ranking Sandinista official whom she kept in power, General Humberto Ortega.

Perhaps it was only an overzealous reaction of the bodyguards worried about assassination attempts, but as Jean Paul sped past the motorcade on the Managua-Masaya highway, no fewer than fifty-four rounds of automatic weapons were fired in his direction. Three hit and killed him.

The cover-up began the next morning, when Ortega ordered the chief of military counterintelligence, Colonel Omar Hallesleven, to form a special commission to investigate the murder—an unequivocal sign that he knew he was in deep trouble and wanted his army subordinates to handle this case and protect him. A week after the incident, Chamorro assured Jean Paul's parents of her total cooperation in solving the murder. Doña Violeta no doubt meant well, but she probably can't do much: her role in this government is purely ceremonial.

Things got stickier two weeks after the killing. A deputy police commander who was investigating the case, Mauricio Aguilar, was shot dead by a fellow police officer, Harold Meza. "It was an accident," said the chief of police. But Aguilar's parents declared that it was "to silence forever what our son knew about the Genie case." In what appears to be a deepening cover-up, a military doctor declared that Meza was drunk at the time of the murder and cannot recall what happened during the three hours around the time when he shot Aguilar. Meza pleaded guilty and was sentenced to three years' work on a penitentiary farm. He spends weekends at home.

In November 1990 the National Assembly, headed by Alfredo César, a former contra leader and now an adversary of the Chamorro-Ortega coalition, created a special commission to deal with the case, which in turn invited experts from the Venezuelan Ministry of Justice to establish the facts. This seemed to be the only way to get an impartial assessment of the case, given a judiciary system where most judges are Sandinista-appointed. In August 1991 the Venezuelans presented their conclusions: the principal suspects in the homicide were the bodyguards of General Humberto Ortega. Since they were not technically conducting an investigation, they did not discuss Ortega's role in the cover-up. But it doesn't take Sherlock Holmes to figure out that Ortega's escorts escort Ortega.

The evidence gathered by the Venezuelan experts was mostly circumstantial, since they got no cooperation from the Nicaraguan police, the Sandinista army, or Ortega himself. One of the crucial points was to identify the vehicles used in the crime. The trajectory of the bullets indicated that the cars from which Jean Paul was shot were higher than his Mitsubishi. Four eyewitnesses remember a caravan of Jeeps; one of them is sure they were Renegades. At that time there were only sixteen Renegades in Nicaragua: four owned privately, four belonging to Daniel Ortega, the former president of Nicaragua, and eight others owned by his brother Humberto, who lives on the Managua-Masaya highway two miles from the site of the crime. The only people who use Renegades in armed escorts are the Ortega brothers. (The movements of the Jeeps used by Humberto cannot be checked because, as the chief of military counterintelligence admitted in court, the log books were burned three months after the shooting.)

In May I asked Minister of the Presidency Antonio Lacayo (who runs the country in the name of his mother-in-law, Doña Violeta) about the Genie case. He gave me the party line: "We are trying to help the judiciary system to uncover the truth." On the findings of the Venezuelan experts, he said, "We really do not think much of the foreigners coming to our country and meddling in our internal affairs." "Even when invited by the National Assembly?" I pressed. "I don't care who invited them!" he snapped.

Last month the investigation was finally closed, and Civil District Judge Boanerges Ojeda, who has shown some courageous willingness to prosecute the wrongdoers, recommended that eight bodyguards of Humberto Ortega stand trial in the shooting of Jean Paul, and that two officers and Ortega himself be tried on charges of covering up the incident. However, Judge Ojeda hastily transferred the case to the military prosecutor's office, supposedly because it involves soldiers. This means that



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Humberto Ortega would stand trial in a court that he oversees.

The daily *La Prensa* (formerly the anti-Sandinista flagship, now the most pro-government of the three main Nicaraguan newspapers) demanded in early July that Ortega step down—to no avail. I spoke with Raymond Genie a few days later. He had appealed the decision to move the trial, arguing that it should be heard in a civilian court.

If this were to happen, the rule of law would be strengthened, but such a development would likely provoke a wave of violence from Sandinista supporters. In early August I spoke with the president of the Nicaraguan Permanent Commission of Human Rights, Lino Hernández, and with the former head of the Nicaraguan Bar Association, Roger Guevara Mena. They both said it was unlikely that the assassins and their accomplices will ever be tried.

The story of the murder of Jean Paul Genie and the subsequent cover-up offers the most dramatic proof yet that the Chamorro-Ortega coalition can guarantee neither peace nor justice in Nicaragua. Judge Ojeda acknowledged as much in issuing his decision on the case. Alluding to *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, he declared: "Our country ... is a revised and updated García Márquez's Macondo village, where the power games influence the purity and the development of the judiciary process." •

## WHITE HOUSE WATCH

# JUST FINE

*By Fred Barnes*

Everything you've heard lately about President Bush is wrong. He's not ill. The proper dosage of his thyroid medicine was worked out months ago. In fact, he's so much himself he often slips into what reporters call his "deep geek mode," acting goofy. (In Michigan on July 27 he called the cereal industry a bulwark of democracy.) He's not deeply depressed either, though he tells fewer jokes in private and he makes it look as though his job isn't fun anymore. Nor has he lost interest in winning re-election. In fact, he's so obsessed with it that he jabbered with a friend about Ross Perot for half an hour—as they jogged. And he's not panicky, although some of his aides are rattled. Sam Skinner, the White House chief of staff, got into a shouting match with Housing Secretary Jack Kemp in late July. A few days later he barged into Press Secretary Marlin Fitzwater's office three times while I was interviewing Fitzwater. Even if Bush were panicked, "He'd never show it on the surface," says a senior aide. Bush's attitude is: Hey, I was right that Pat Buchanan would fade and Perot would drop out, so trust me when I say I'll whip Bill Clinton.

That's asking a lot, particularly since Bush stubbornly insists on a strategy that most of his White House and campaign aides regard as loony. Bush's idea is that he shouldn't "shift gears" and get into full "campaign mode" until after the Republican convention in Houston. So he hasn't. The most he's done is "tiptoe into the water," attacking Democratic nominee Bill Clinton mildly and not by name. Even that he's done reluctantly. Campaign manager Bob Teeter is one of the few Bushies who can keep a straight face while defending this strategy. "The [period from the] convention on, if you do it well, is enough," he says. But even Teeter doesn't sound convinced. He sees the results of the strategy. Clinton is campaigning effectively. Bush acts self-consciously "presidential," prompting wild rumors about his health, psyche, and zeal.

In frustration, Bush aides have turned to the speech text ruse. This consists of persuading Bush's new chief speechwriter, Steve Provost, to put strong political language in the drafts sent to Bush and hoping the president goes along. "Giving encouragement to Steve has helped the process," says a campaign official. "He started to write it, and Bush said it."

But "it" wasn't much. Bush gingerly broached the subject of "trust." When the phone rings in the White House late at night, "The American people need to know that the man who answers the phone has the experience, the seasoning, to do the right thing," he said in Neenah, Wisconsin, on July 27. "I believe I have proved I am that man. That is trust in the traditional sense. But people who've spent their lives in government forget that trust is even more than that.... To lead a great nation, you must first trust the people that you lead." There's an echo of Jimmy Carter in this, which isn't a positive sign. Carter suggested Reagan couldn't be trusted with the presidency. He made about as much headway with that argument as Bush is now, with Clinton.

Bush finally caught on to the speech ruse. When presented a text (written by deputy budget director Bob Grady) for a speech in Colorado Springs on August 6, he balked. It's a campaign speech, and I don't want to give one, he said. So Provost had to put together a softer text in which Bush criticized Clinton's economic plan but also patted himself on the back for taking campaign hits without fighting back. "I have been blamed for everything except that crazy scoring system that was used in the Olympic boxing competition," Bush said. He'd "been a little slow to fight back," but for good reason.

The reason he gave is that "people are sick of politics." But the real reason Bush hasn't fought back is that he loathes politics. Being president energizes him. Being a candidate doesn't. To him, it's the low road. "He absolutely wants to be re-elected," says a senior adviser, "but he'd like to do it without campaigning." Bush knows he can't do that, but at least he can put off campaigning as long as possible.



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Bush can't hide his disgust for politics. In Wyoming, Michigan, on July 27, he referred to the campaign as "the four-year dance that American politicians go through." He said, in an August 7 press conference, that "little seminars" can explore why his popularity has plummeted. And he always makes a distinction between the real work of the presidency and mere campaigning. "When it comes to a serious foreign policy issue, I'm going to do my level best to keep it out of the political arena," he said at the press conference. "I have some responsibilities as a candidate," he added. But that comes later.

Since Bush regards politics as a low calling, he's extraordinarily cynical once he indulges. He's not fussy about what he says about opponents. If an issue is questionable or peripheral but nonetheless effective—Mike Dukakis's handling of pollution in Boston Harbor comes to mind—Bush's tendency is to run with it. Why not? That's what politics is all about. My guess is we'll soon be hearing a lot from Bush about the minutiae of Clinton's Arkansas record—after the convention, of course.

GEORGE BUSH BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Bush may have been a tool of his handlers in 1988, but he isn't this year. His writers have been trying to get him to begin speeches with jokes instead of acknowledging, by name, the presence of everyone on the dais. This usually bores the crowd, getting Bush off to a bad start. And it instantly identifies him as a politician from an earlier era. But he won't change. "You have a man who's so temperamentally unsuited for the times that it's difficult for him to communicate," says a top official of the Bush campaign. "He's out of sync. You can't change that. It was fine in 1988. Now it's not."

Bush insisted on putting a joke he'd told around the White House in his Colorado Springs speech. It involves a gladiator who's killed every lion in town. His buddies send for the meanest lion in the world, bury the gladiator up to his neck, and let the lion loose in the arena. The lion made "a deadly pass at the gladiator's head," Bush said. "And as he did, the gladiator reached up and took a very ferocious bite in a very sensitive place in the lion's anatomy. And the lion howled in pain and ran for the exit. And the lead centurion ran out, attacked the gladiator, screaming, 'Fight fair, damn it, fight fair.'" Folks looked at each other, then laughed, then applauded. Bush thought the story perfectly highlighted how unfairly he's been treated recently. Whenever he mentions Clinton, Bush said, he's accused of negative campaigning.

Bush has developed a sense of indignation. He's not happy with congressional Republicans. He chastised Republican leaders for allowing GOP criticism of him to seep into the press. "I don't mind criticism, but I don't want to read it first in *The Washington Post*," he said. When Bush learned from Vice President Dan Quayle that campaign official Fred Malek had been worked over by a group of angry House Republicans, he called Malek to commiserate. "There's a lot of carping up there," he said, meaning Capitol Hill. Republicans may be carping, but they're also terrified. They're afraid that Bush's strategy may bring them all down.

More than anything else, the presidential race has brought out Bush's secretive streak. He hasn't told Republicans how he intends to revive his candidacy, post-convention. All he's said is he'll fight back, which isn't very reassuring. "My day is coming," he said in Colorado Springs. He has boasted to aides that no one could know his plans for Secretary of State James Baker in the fall because he and Baker haven't told anyone. "There aren't any sources," Bush said.

Another secretive move was the hiring of Ray Price to write Bush's acceptance speech at the Republican convention. This is, arguably, Bush's most important speech since his address to the GOP convention four years ago. That time, Peggy Noonan wrote the speech. She was brought to Washington and asked to write this one too. Noonan agreed, but then backed out, writing the White House that she's now an author, not a speechwriter. So Bush, on his own, summoned Price, a former speech-



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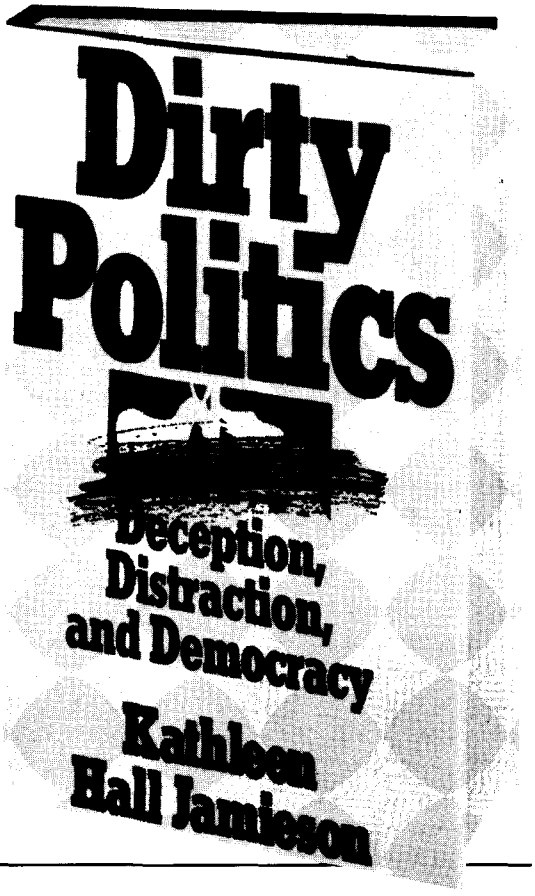


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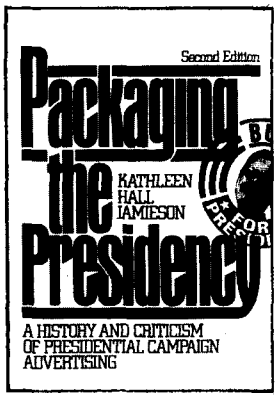
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writer for President Nixon, in July. Price had written Bush a memo a month earlier with suggested themes for the Houston speech. Bush was hooked. He took Price to Camp David for consultation about the speech, then to his summer home in Kennebunkport. Price has never written a speech for Bush before. The first one better be good. •

## Clinton's hypocritics.

# BROKEN RECORDS

*By Jesse Furman*

A few weeks before the Democratic convention last month, Republican Governor William Weld of Massachusetts went to Little Rock to blast Bill Clinton's Arkansas record. At a press conference only a block from the governor's mansion, Weld said Clinton was a "tax and spend" type who was weak on environmental and economic issues. A few weeks later Governor Carroll Campbell of South Carolina repeated Weld's accusations before the Independent Business Coalition for Bush-Quayle '92 in Washington, and added that Clinton was to blame for the weakness of the Arkansas education system. Meanwhile, President Bush has been taking the high road, avoiding even mentioning his opponent by name. This is a concerted strategy. Using surrogates shields the president from criticism about negative campaigning, while poking holes in his opponent's record.

The surrogates, however, should look to their own houses. Citing a national study that gave Arkansas low ratings for environmental quality, Weld censured "Governor Clinton's neglect ... and his favoring of poultry interests in order to feather his own political nest." But Weld's environmental record, though strong on some issues, is by no means better than Clinton's. Arkansas is one of only a few states to comply with all terms of the federal Clean Air Act; Massachusetts, on the other hand, has been classified by the feds as a "serious" violator. Around 85 percent of Arkansas's rivers and streams are fishable and swimmable; in Massachusetts the figure is only about 50 percent. Although Weld campaigned on increased environmental vigilance, he has cut environmental spending by more than 40 percent.

As for the charge that Clinton has favored business at the expense of the environment, Weld's own secretary of environmental affairs, Susan Tierney, has opposed levying fines and penalties on convicted corporate polluters because, in her words, it "sent the wrong signal to businesses." And the governor has retreated on his election promise of "no net loss" of designated wetlands (a pledge he once described as "the core of my value system") in favor of reforms that favor business. The main proponent of easing these regulations is the cranberry industry, led by the Ocean Spray corporation.

How about education? Contrasting Clinton's policy with that of President Bush, Campbell charged that Clinton pays teachers inadequately. But a 12.5 percent raise last year put Arkansas first in the country in teacher salary increases; South Carolina, with a 0.3 percent drop, ranked forty-eighth. South Carolina teachers owe thanks for previous raises not to Campbell, but to Dick Riley, his Democratic predecessor. And though the average SAT score in South Carolina rose by forty points from 1984 to 1988, it has declined by four points since Campbell took office.

The two governors' harshest criticism of Clinton was on the subject of tax increases and his handling of the Arkansas economy. What each failed to mention is that among all the states, Arkansas ranks forty-ninth in tax burden per capita and dead last in spending. South Carolina, meanwhile, ranks forty-first in taxation and thirty-seventh in expenditures. And Massachusetts, despite massive tax and spending cuts under Weld, is sixth and eighth, respectively. Campbell touts his own record of lowering the personal income tax, but he fails to mention that he raised it before lowering it, and that it's still higher than it was when he was elected. Meanwhile, since Clinton's first election, the tax burden relative to the U.S. average has actually dropped in Arkansas; in South Carolina, under Campbell, it's risen.

It is no coincidence that both Weld and Campbell avoided any mention of balanced budgets. Clinton has balanced twelve budgets in a row with only three significant tax increases. These were specifically earmarked for teacher salary increases and other improvements in education. Weld has managed to balance his first three budgets only with the help of a $1.2 billion tax package that Michael Dukakis passed in July 1990, just before his term expired. Campbell, meanwhile, faces a huge budget shortfall for the second year in a row, a situation he has blamed on rainy weather affecting tourism.

Of course, Campbell and Weld are not alone in their travails. State governors around the nation—Republican and Democrat alike—are struggling to make ends meet. Republican Governor Pete Wilson of California faces a towering $10.7 billion deficit, despite raising taxes by $7.4 billion last year and imposing draconian spending cuts across the board. This is partly the result of the sharp cuts in federal spending under the Reagan and Bush administrations, a situation one might expect Weld and Campbell to understand. And in other contexts, indeed, they have. In 1991 America's governors—not just the Democratic ones—voted Clinton "most effective governor in the nation." That was just two years after Campbell wrote to Clinton: "Your state's economic development report ... is an excellent portrayal of the South's economic position, the challenges that are before us and innovative ways that we can become more internationally competitive." But that was before George Bush was twenty points behind in the polls. •



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**The president in his own terms.**

# THE CASE FOR BUSH

*By Richard Vigilante*

Having spent almost four years being dissatisfied with George Bush, I am not surprised most Americans feel the same way. Still, the closer one looks, the clearer it becomes that Bush is one of those presidents to whom history will be very kind, especially if we let him finish his run. In the past four years he has quietly prepared the country for a brilliant turn of the century and perhaps for another American century beyond.

Bush is a much better president than politician. Unlike Reagan, who kept the electorate focused on a few crucial issues, Bush distracts voters by treating even the largest questions as accumulations of detail. He dislikes and is not very good at electoral politics, preferring to deal inside the Beltway rather than carry the fight to the people. And he is an orator in the great tradition of Stengel and Berra. As a result, he has governed almost in private.

Bush's uncommunicativeness is a personal flaw magnified by the political tradition to which he is heir. Bush is a conservative. But like Goldwater, Nixon, Eisenhower, and Rockefeller, he is a Roosevelt-era Republican, the last of a tradition of Republican leaders traumatized by the FDR years and by the electorate's conviction that the Republicans not only caused the Great Depression but were too cold-blooded to do anything about it. These Republicans tended to be electoral pessimists, believing that while it was the great historic mission of their party to provide responsible government and keep Democrats from dissipating the nation's wealth and morals, the electorate was sure to punish them for fulfilling that mission.

In Bush's view, it is part of political life to be punished for doing right, which is why he has such a hard time running on his record. He is averse both to the "do anything as long as you are doing something" approach to government and to the idea that the agenda of good government should be superseded by bright new multipoint policy programs. Also in the Roosevelt-era mode, he tends to compensate by being good at negotiation and skillful behind closed doors.

Seen in this perspective, Bush's record makes far more sense. Take three areas: the economy, civil rights, and social policy. In all three, Bush is regarded as a failure because he has been neither a liberal nor a Reaganite. The opposite is the case. The economy is the most obvious example of this. Although the voters are mad at his apparently lethargic handling of a slump, and though he's said little to change their view, history will almost certainly credit Bush as one of the two or three best economic presidents of the century. If we stay on course, the United States is almost certainly headed for a great turn-of-the-century boom and strong, steady growth for years beyond. The three great engines of the '90s expansion will be the final victory over the Great Inflation of the 1970s, the expansion of free trade, and the end of communism.

The general rap on Bush is that he has "done nothing about the recession." Good for him. The current slump is global, and the United States is actually doing better than most of the G-7. Most of the forces behind the slump are beyond the government's short-term control, and many will help the economy in the medium and long term: for example, not only did the Gulf crisis bring an oil shock, but as short wars do, it choked the economy rather than stimulated it. The breakup of the Soviet Union and the reunification of Germany have caused a temporary spike in interest rates. The Basel capital agreements caused a temporary tightening in the lending policies of major U.S. banks, but were also a milestone in the integration of the world banking system.

Under these circumstances the last thing we would have wanted was a president who would panic and start bullying the economy, pulling out all the stimulative stops to fake a recovery before the election. Bush has risked his second term to do the right thing. The Great Inflation, brought on by the dissolution of the Bretton Woods system, and only partly tamed by Reagan and Volcker, was fatally wounded by Bush-Greenspan. Inflation has been averaging around 3 percent. If we stay on course it will probably begin the final descent to 2, which economists count as roughly zero. Equally important, the market seems to believe it. Both short- and long-term nominal interest rates are at twenty-year lows or better; the market seems to be surrendering its anticipated inflation premium for long-term rates. Already, as Bear Stearn's chief economist and former OMB official Lawrence Kudlow points out, low inflation and interest rates are providing a sizable "monetary tax cut," lowering the cost of doing business, boosting assets, shrinking debt. The drop in mortgage interest rates alone has given home-owning families a "tax cut" of nearly $30 billion a year.

Does Bush deserve the credit? Not all of it, of course; a great deal goes to Alan Greenspan. But presidents can either protect the Fed or frustrate it. Carter, ignorant, resentful, inexperienced, and desperate to be re-elected, packed Arthur Burns off to be ambassador to Germany and appointed the pliable G. William Miller, one of the worst chairmen in history, who revved up inflation into the double digits. Bush has done everything right. He reappointed Greenspan to another four-year term in the middle of the recession even after the chairman made it clear he was not going to sacrifice the fight against inflation to Bush's re-election. All presidents complain publicly about the Fed. But despite White House statements claiming (accurately) that the Fed was slowing the recovery, senior Fed officials say Bush has been more supportive of their austere policy than any president in memory. So why isn't Bush crowing about inflation? Well, Roosevelt-era Republicans think stopping inflation is one of the things they



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were put on earth to do and then be punished for.

On trade, Bush's performance has been superb. Last year, when the administration made clear it was serious about using the Uruguay round of GATT to reduce world agricultural subsidies, it inspired hilarity among the Europeans and among American reporters, all of whom proclaimed that Bush was being an unrealistic dogmatist. The Uruguay agreement will not be perfect, but thanks to Bush's efforts, it will expand the market for U.S. food products (although sugar will be hurt) and save American consumers some $30 billion a year in lower food prices. And American farm subsidies will be reduced; Uruguay is also a domestic budget-cutting tool.

If we re-elect Bush, he will bring Mexico into the North American Free Trade Agreement, something we might lose if Clinton's pandering to the Gephardt wing on trade lasts past November. Since Mexico joined GATT in 1986 and sharply reduced its trade barriers, U.S. exports to Mexico have doubled, and our trade deficit with Mexico has dropped substantially; excluding oil, we now run a surplus. If Mexico left the Third World, the economic and social benefits to the United States in the long run would be enormous. NAFTA is a big part of getting there, not only because of the increase in trade it will bring, but because it helps bond Mexico to the worldwide democratic capitalist renaissance.

In social and environmental legislation as on the economy, Bush has been pilloried—and misunderstood. Here again Bush's problems come not from ideology but from another misread aspect of his Roosevelt-era mentality. His keenness for negotiated settlements, in which one wins quietly, almost secretly, by getting the details right, inclines him to work with the Democratic Congress rather than dramatically go over its head to the people. But in the view of the Reaganites, working with Congress produced the great disasters of his first term: the budget deal and what the Bush people respectfully call "the legislative record": the Clean Air Act amendments, the Civil Rights Bill, and the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The conservatives are wrong twice over. First, they have to recognize that avoiding Congress is a romantic fantasy no working president can indulge in. Bush does not have as many votes in the House or as much control of the Senate as Reagan did. Given the numbers, the decision to hammer out the best possible bill and take some political losses rather than make the grand political gesture and end up with a worse bill and an override is not a bad one. Second, the conservatives have to recognize that the Bushites have actually won some critical battles in the details. They have devoted months of political energy to struggles over legislative wording, fighting to define the center and win its votes while preordaining an acceptable outcome when the legislation hits the courts.

The clearest vindication of Bush's strategy came in the two-year struggle over the Civil Rights Bill. Ultimately the administration won a clear victory against rigid racial preferences. The purpose of the Civil Rights Bill of 1990, the Kennedy-Hawkins bill, was to reverse the Supreme Court's 1989 *Wards Cove* decision. Before *Wards Cove* an employer without the right proportion of minorities in a particular job could find himself on the defensive in court even if he clearly had not intended to discriminate. *Wards Cove* shifted most of the advantages to the employer, requiring the plaintiff to identify the specific employment practice that was causing the disparate impact, and to demonstrate that the practice was not excused by "business necessity."

Bush vetoed Kennedy-Hawkins and was upheld, but that was only the first act: there were more than enough votes to override a veto for a compromise bill perceived as moderate. Both sides set out on a long struggle to control the compromise, fighting for language that a majority of Congress would accept but that would go their way in court. On the day Bush signed, it was already clear the administration had won more than it lost. If, as the early returns suggest, the courts buy the administration's interpretation of most of the compromise language, the great civil rights lobby push to overturn *Wards Cove* was a bust (see "Discrimination Endgame" by Paul Gewirtz, TNR, August 12, 1991). There is also a big net improvement in the bill that had nothing to do with *Wards Cove*: it makes race norming of test scores illegal.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (which critics fear will overburden employers and landlords required to accommodate the handicapped) and the Clean Air Act amendments are variations on the same story: not quite enough votes, long fights over the details, particularly over adjudicable language, better-than-expected results. The amendments to the Clean Air Act, to which even the conservative Heritage Foundation gave "two cheers," introduce into federal statute for the first time market-oriented environmental strategies that conservatives have been advocating for years. Moreover Bush, who concedes he gave the regulatory agencies too much rope in his first two years, has promised to lighten the regulatory impact of both bills administratively.

On social policy, the Bush administration is being attacked by the right and the left, both of which argue that it has no social policy, except a usually damaging pragmatism. Reaganites attack anything that is not ideologically satisfying; and Clintonites charge do-nothingism. In these pages, Mickey Kaus recently claimed (see "Paradigm's Loss," July 27) that Bush New Paradigmers such as James Pinkerton and Jack Kemp are actually betraying the cause because Bush has done nothing to enact the New Paradigm while Clinton is a true believer.

In fact, it is probably the Clinton Paradigmers who are fooling themselves. Bush, who gave Pinkerton his position in the first place, and under whose aegis the movement was born (though many of the ideas were first tried under Reagan), is nursing the substance of the paradigm along very nicely.

Take school choice. Choice cannot be programmed from Washington. It is too dependent on local leadership. The best a president can give school choice is "bully pulpit plus," the plus being a modest financial incentive for state or local education authorities to move toward choice. It was Bush, Lamar Alexander, and a few top Bushies who made choice a serious national issue, not



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only by talking about it and helping local choice leaders achieve national visibility, but by placing it on the administration's legislative agenda. The administration's G.I. Bill for Kids, for example, now before Congress, would attach $1,000 per child to students in selected school districts that set up choice programs.

But effective school choice is an extremely difficult political goal. Like many New Paradigm projects, it requires declaring war on that vast bureaucratic postindustrial complex that dominates not only the educational and social welfare system but the Democratic Party. The administrators, the consultants, the NEA, the schools of education, lose everything under choice. Bush has the potential and the political base to see this through. There is every indication that he is committed to the decentralized imposition of the policy. In all likelihood, Clinton would be hobbled by the very Democratic interest groups school choice undermines.

Much the same story could be told of the rest of the agenda: tenant management and housing vouchers, which made some inroads under the Bush administration. Bush has made modest progress; Clinton will probably be politically incapacitated if he so much as tries. What's more, Bush (with the help of some progressive young Democrats) beat the bureaucratic ABC day care bill and instead increased the earned income tax credit to give working low-income families the single biggest boost in government aid in history. Even Clinton cites Kemp's ideas at HUD as model New Paradigm proposals. All of them would be stymied by the influx of standard-issue Democrats into the middle and upper echelons of the bureaucracy.

In all of these areas—economic policy, domestic legislation, civil rights, and education—a clear argument can be made for Bush's presidency: for his courage, for his attendance to the details of government rather than the dictates of politics, and for his tangible experimentation with new models of government.

Bush is called a caretaker president, and that is meant as criticism, or at best a left-handed compliment, a synonym for lethargy or lack of imagination, a man suited only to quiet times. That's all wrong. Precisely because these are not quiet times, we need someone like Bush. America has been dealt a rich but complicated hand; for all the talk about the urgent needs for bold, new policies, what we really need to do now is play out that hand without messing up. We need strength of character more than policy papers. We need someone who cares about making the right choice even when the country may not credit him for it because the choices are complicated and obscure and difficult to explain in a sound bite. We need someone who expects virtue to be its own reward, a man who cares more about doing just right, the tasks history hands him than about putting his own mark on all he sees. It is a time remarkably well-suited to Bush. He has done well; we should let him finish.

RICHARD VIGILANTE is writing a book about the *New York Daily News* strike and the future of American labor.

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**A foreign policy realignment?**

# CLOSING THE LOOP

*By Patrick Glynn*

The Bush administration committed a serious political blunder in attacking Bill Clinton on the issue of intervention in Bosnia, with implications not only for the outcome of this election but also for the future of the two parties. Indeed, in a matter of a few weeks, the debate over Bosnia has brought a remarkable political change. For the first time in twenty years, the Democrats find themselves, politically speaking, on the right side, and many Republicans on the wrong side, of the question about the use of force in international affairs.

As Clinton and his circle well understand, public perception of Democratic "weakness" in foreign affairs has been a major factor in the last four Democratic presidential defeats. When George Bush beat Michael Dukakis in 1988, he did so on basically three issues: taxes, crime, and national defense. As late as May 1991 the Gallup organization reported that Americans saw the Democrats as "too weak" on foreign policy and national defense by a margin of 50 percent to 38 percent.

On Bosnia, however, the roles have been reversed. It was the Democratic candidate (along with some congressional Republicans) who originally called for forceful intervention. Bush only belatedly embraced the idea, while expressing his "heartfelt hope" that intervention would not be necessary. Although Bush's position may have been superficially more in line with public opinion—at least until recently, polls showed the public reluctant to get involved militarily in the Balkans—the long-run effect may be to bring Democrats closer to mainstream public thinking on foreign policy. In advocating forceful action in Bosnia, Clinton appears to have left behind the Democrats' politically debilitating taboo on the use of American military power. The reversal reflects a post-cold war shift of consciousness in both parties—a shift that could affect not only the course of presidential elections but the nature of future American foreign policy.

On the Democratic side, three factors have helped to promote rethinking about the question of force. First was the Gulf war debate, where most congressional Democrats found themselves dramatically proven wrong (a clear exception was Clinton's running mate, Al Gore, who voted for the war and who has also been central in shaping the Clinton position on Bosnia). Second was the end of the cold war and the Soviet Union, which shifted attention from arms control theory, which had dominated Democratic thinking about force and foreign policy since the days of Vietnam. Arms control theory—centered on the prevention of nuclear holocaust—provided an elaborate, and to many Democrats very persuasive, intellectual rationale for what amounted to policies of accommodation toward the Soviet Union. Finally there was political calculation. By the end of the 1980s it was all too obvious to smart Democrats—among them, it appears, Clinton—that the reputation for softness in foreign policy was a major barrier between any Democrat and the White House.

The shift on the Republican side has been almost equally profound. With the notable exception of the Gulf war, Bush has pursued a foreign policy at odds with that of his immediate predecessor. At the heart of the contrast is a different attitude toward the role of ideology or principle in American foreign policy. For Ronald Reagan and his followers the cold war above all was a war of ideas and values: ideological appeals were integral not only to Reagan's speeches but also to the internal Reagan administration foreign policy debates. Bush has consistently avoided ideological appeals and debates—with the exception of his Gulf war speeches, which were almost caricatures of Churchillian rhetoric.

Bush has returned instead a kind of value-neutral managerialism in foreign policy reminiscent of the Nixon-Kissinger years (the policy toward Bosnia, for example, has been heavily shaped by two former Kissinger aides, national security adviser Brent Scowcroft and Deputy Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger). The watchword of the administration has been "stability," and in the avowed service of stability moral principles have been all too obviously sacrificed. The most conspicuous examples were the reluctance to penalize China for the Tiananmen Square massacre, the resistance to aiding Kurds and Shiites slaughtered by Saddam Hussein's army after the Gulf war, and the refusal to differentiate between emerging democratic and despotic forces in collapsing Yugoslavia. The ironic consequence has been that in none of these cases—particularly Iraq and Yugoslavia—has the objective of stability been served.

In adopting non-ideological managerialism, Bush renounced the body of thinking that underpinned Republican foreign policy in the 1980s: neoconservatism. Neoconservatives and their ideas—reflecting in many respects a traditional Democratic sensibility—found little place in the Bush administration. It hired almost none of Reagan's neoconservative team, and few outside had real influence. Indeed, the Bush administration has often evinced a near hostility to ideas, an insouciance toward analysis bordering on anti-intellectualism. From the start, the president seemed to assume that little more is required for effective foreign policy than superior instinct, experience, and general savoir faire.

The devaluation of ideas and principles—those vital intangibles of democratic foreign policy—has had three perverse consequences for the administration. First, it has led to serious miscalculation—most conspicuously, perhaps, in the Balkans, where Bush tilted toward aggres-



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sive Serbia until such a stance became preposterous. Second, it has fed isolationist sentiment at home. And finally, it has left an opening for the Democrats.

Clinton had already tried to position himself toward the ideological center by citing his support for the president during the Gulf war. (In fact, that support was somewhat more ambiguous and reluctant than Clinton's later statements suggested.) But it was Bosnia that changed the game. Bosnia was a natural issue for the Democrats. Democratic thinking about foreign policy has always tended to be driven more by principle than by pragmatic calculation. In a sense, Clinton's stance on Bosnia is in a tradition reaching back to Franklin Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson, both of whom invoked powerful moral themes to justify U.S. intervention.

Clinton's Bosnian stance has enormous electoral value. It leaves him well-positioned whether Bush intervenes or not. (If he doesn't, Clinton can continue to criticize; if he does, Clinton can say, "It was my policy"; and if there is intervention and military failure, Bush, not Clinton, will take the blame.) It also effectively forecloses the kind of ad campaign that Bush used so effectively against Dukakis in 1988—a shot of the Massachusetts governor atop an M-1 tank that became symbolic of Democratic incompetence on defense.

Gore has played a pivotal role in the transformation. A committed arms controller during the Reagan years, highly critical of the hard-liners, Gore not only endorsed the Gulf war in 1991 but took an early interest in the Yugoslavia breakup, where he staked out an extremely tough position. (As long ago as last winter, Gore prophetically accused the Bush administration of pursuing "appeasement" vis-à-vis Serbia.) Gore most perfectly embodies the Democratic evolution away from the Vietnam syndrome.

There is, of course, the danger that once in office, the Democrats will revert to type. Many of the key members of the Clinton foreign policy team—Warren Christopher, Anthony Lake, Samuel R. Berger, among others—hail from the Carter administration. Nancy Soderberg, a former Edward Kennedy aide, was deputy director of foreign policy for the Dukakis campaign and now directs foreign policy for Clinton. Clinton's team might well replicate the split that bedeviled the Carter administration, where policy swung between the views of hard-line national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski and the more powerful soft-line faction headed by Secretary of State Cyrus Vance.

But unlike Carter, who was driven by millenarian, demi-pacifist views, Clinton seems more of a pragmatist in the John F. Kennedy mold. It is not yet clear whether a President Clinton would show the same boldness that candidate Clinton must find politically convenient. What is clear is that Bush has let the Democrats usurp what was once his greatest source of pride and political strength: his supple handling of foreign affairs. With "no new taxes" jettisoned, it was the only trump card he had left.

PATRICK GLYNN is the author of *Closing Pandora's Box: Arms Races, Arms Control, and the History of the Cold War* (New Republic Books).

**And why it beats Bush-Reagan.**

# CLINTONOMICS 101

*By Robert B. Reich*

The presidential campaigns contrast two opposing economic philosophies about how to get the American economy back on a path of high growth. Which is likely to work? I admit I'm not exactly a disinterested observer. I have known Bill Clinton for twenty-four years, since we were students at Oxford University, and I've been talking with him about public policy and economic growth for almost as long. I also helped draft his economic plan. On the other hand, I was making many of the following arguments long before he decided to run.

On June 23 Clinton unveiled his plan; on July 23 the president unveiled his, for the second time this year (the first was in his State of the Union address). The contrast could not be sharper. The centerpiece of the Clinton plan is a major increase in public investment in education, training, and infrastructure. The president's plan contains various tax credits and incentives, but its centerpiece, as before, is a cut in the capital gains tax.

To term either plan a "philosophy" risks grandiloquence. That term implies some degree of logical coherence, details that fit together and rest easily upon a set of first principles. At the least, it implies something more than the product of political balancing that characterizes election-year proposals. But both plans do represent philosophies of a sort. Each candidate has a worldview about the economy, about what makes it tick—or, more precisely, what will restart its ticking.

Bush's plan rests firmly upon the same supply-side premises of his predecessor in the White House. Despite his tax increase two years ago, Bush's basic inclination is still to rely on tax incentives as the most direct means of fostering growth. That faith rests on a simple syllogism. Labor productivity—the linchpin of growth—depends on the amount of physical capital available to each worker. With more and newer factories and equipment, American workers can produce goods in greater volume, at lower costs per unit. How to get more capital per worker? Induce wealthy individuals to invest discretionary income. And how? Increase their return on such investments by cutting their taxes—ideally, their income tax, but at least, the tax they'll owe when they sell their investments for a profit.

In political terms, it suggests a bargain between the best-off members of society, who possess most of its discretionary income, and everyone else. The nation should forgo the tax revenues that the best-off otherwise



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would contribute to the common good; in return, this elite will invest even greater sums in factories and machinery—which will improve the productivity and real wages of workers lower down. America's egalitarian ethic, in other words, should accept a less progressive system of taxation for the sake of widespread gains.

The supply-side syllogism, however, runs into several inconvenient facts, the most obvious of which is that we already tried it and it didn't work. Beginning in 1981, the first half of the bargain was kept. The effective marginal tax rate of high-income Americans was cut. Preferences for investment income tipped the scales even further, since middle-class Americans don't have nearly the investment income of wealthy Americans. Were the federal income tax as progressive as it was in the late 1970s, the top 2 percent of American earners would have paid about $72 billion more in federal taxes on their 1991 incomes.

But the second half of the bargain hasn't been kept. Although disputes continue to simmer over precise measurements, there is little debate over the basics: the share of GNP saved or invested did not rise substantially in the 1980s. Nor did productivity. Measured over the entire decade, per person growth in gross domestic products was the slowest of any decade since World War II. The federal budget deficit ballooned. The average American was no better off than before; those at the bottom grew much poorer in absolute terms.

There is no reason to expect President Bush's new plan would have any different result. The problem, in essence, is that too many links are missing in the supposed chain of cause-and-effect—between cutting taxes on the rich and increasing the productivity of everyone else. For one thing, rich Americans—once relieved of some of their tax burden—do not necessarily invest their extra wealth in factories, machinery, and equipment. They tend to consume and speculate. But not even the portion of their windfall that they *do* invest is likely to have much of an impact on American productivity, since it is concentrated on capital assets rather than people. And here is where the contrast with Clinton's approach becomes especially clear. In the emerging global economy, national productivity is uniquely related to the accumulation of *human* capital. High-tech factories and equipment are worthless without skilled workers. For fifteen years American firms have loaded on computers, for example, but haven't reaped the benefits because employees don't know how to use them to improve output and quality.

The rates of return on investments in people—in their education and training—are thus high, and appear to be accelerating. One piece of evidence is the growing wage gap between workers who have college degrees and those who don't. In 1980 graduates earned about 50 percent more than non-grads; ten years later they were pulling in twice the non-grad wage. New evidence suggests that every additional year of schooling increases future wages by 15 percent. Compounded over a working lifetime, we're talking big money.

What's more, every factor of production *other* than people and infrastructure is moving with ever greater ease across national boundaries. Rather than trickle down, the savings of rich Americans are as likely to trickle out to wherever in the world they get the highest return. Nor are new technologies—in the form of plans and blueprints—securely moored behind borders; these days they move from computers in one nation to computers in another at the speed of electric impulses. So too with modern factories and equipment, which are now erected in the remotest regions of the globe by corporations that are themselves losing their national identities.

Still rooted within a nation's borders, however, are most of its people—and their collective capacities to think, innovate, and use critical judgment. Also rooted within borders are the roads, bridges, ports, toxic waste treatment facilities, and airports that support these people in their efforts to be productive. Upon these two assets the future standard of living of a nation's people uniquely depends.

This dynamic can be seen as readily in Malaysia as in Mississippi. Global capital in the form of personal savings, corporate earnings, technology, or plant and equipment will remain within, or be attracted to, a particular location around the world only if it can obtain a high financial return. On this point George Bush and Bill Clinton would find themselves in complete agreement. The two part company when it comes to deciding how to deliver that high return.

Developing nations and even some states and cities try to lure capital with the promise of low wages, low taxes, and negligible environmental and safety regulations. This supply-side strategy does indeed attract capital. Ford Motor will gladly build a modern engine plant in Mexico, hiring Mexican workers to toil for $100 a month and enjoying extremely low taxes and lax environmental and safety regulations. Ford can expect a healthy return on its investment, and Mexicans get jobs. But this strategy will not result in a high standard of living for the citizens of the nation that deploys it. To the contrary, it puts that nation in direct competition for the next Ford plant with regions of the world that are willing to accept even lower wages and fewer pollution and safety standards—and it reduces tax revenues that might otherwise have been invested in education and infrastructure in order to reverse the process. (Clinton, like many other Southerners, learned this lesson the hard way when his state's low wages and low taxes attracted Northern textile manufacturers, who later moved to Southeast Asia.)

The only way to lure global capital while maintaining or increasing the standard of living (defined to include not only good wages but also a healthy environment and safe working conditions) is to offer a highly skilled work force and a world-class infrastructure. These two uniquely national assets, combined with global financial capital, will also be profitable for global investors—and will profit the nation's citizens. This high living-standard route is being pursued aggressively by many nations, even those whose average wages, taxes, and regulations are



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now higher or more burdensome than those in the United States. Global capital is not attracted to the former West Germany by its low cost of doing business. It is attracted *despite* the high wages, taxes, and regulations because of Germany's excellent labor force and its superb infrastructure, which links it to the rest of Europe.

The Clinton economic strategy is built upon these new realities. It recognizes that the best way to spur productivity is by investing in people directly: ensuring that infants get adequate nutrition and health care, preschoolers have adequate day care and Head Start, kids have good schools, teenagers who don't go on to college get a chance to develop productive skills, those who are eligible for college can afford to go, workers can get good on-the-job training, and all who wish can upgrade their skills. It also recognizes the importance of roads, airports, toxic waste facilities, fiber-optic information networks, and high-speed trains—the infrastructure that supports human capital.

The Clinton plan calls for more than $200 billion of new public investment in education and infrastructure, spread over four years. This sum is not enough to yield dramatic improvements in growth anytime soon, but it marks an important start. And it compensates for the decline in public investment since 1980. Starved of tax revenues and confronted with a growing budget deficit, the federal government has reduced support for child health, education, training, and infrastructure by a third. According to the Bush administration's own estimates, Washington will invest less than 7 percent of the budget in human capital and infrastructure in fiscal year 1992.

Although some wealthy suburban townships have been able to make up the difference, most American towns and cities have been left stranded. The largest cities have fared the worst. In 1980 the federal government provided almost 18 percent of the costs of running major cities—and most of these funds went to human capital and infrastructure. Today, even as local tax bases shrivel, the federal contribution is barely over 6 percent. The result has been a growing disparity in the quality of schools, parks, public health care, job training, and roads available to Americans of different incomes. Wealthy Americans are taking less responsibility for the needs of their less affluent compatriots.

The Clinton plan would pay for this new public investment mainly by cutting defense expenditures and by increasing the marginal tax rate on the top 2 percent of American households (earning $200,000 and above). In other words, less than a quarter of the tax windfall granted America's highest earners by Reagan and Bush would be dedicated instead to ensuring that other Americans could become more productive members of society. In this respect, the two plans represent mirror images of one another: the first calls for tax cuts on the highest incomes, even if the accompanying revenue loss necessitates reductions in government's capacity to invest; the second calls for tax increases on the highest

*continued on page 28*


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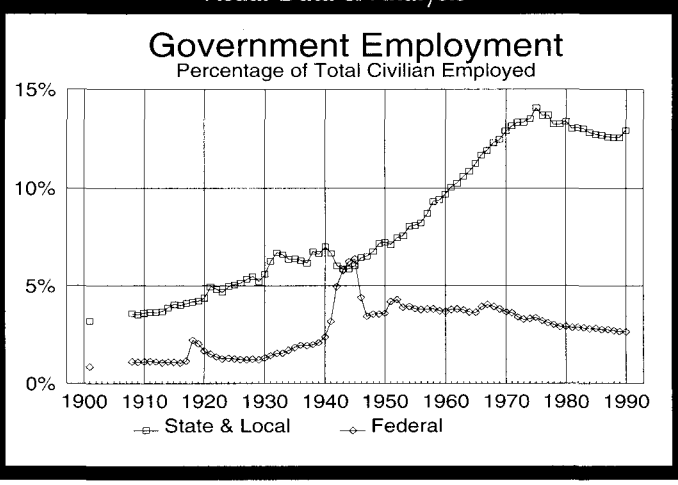


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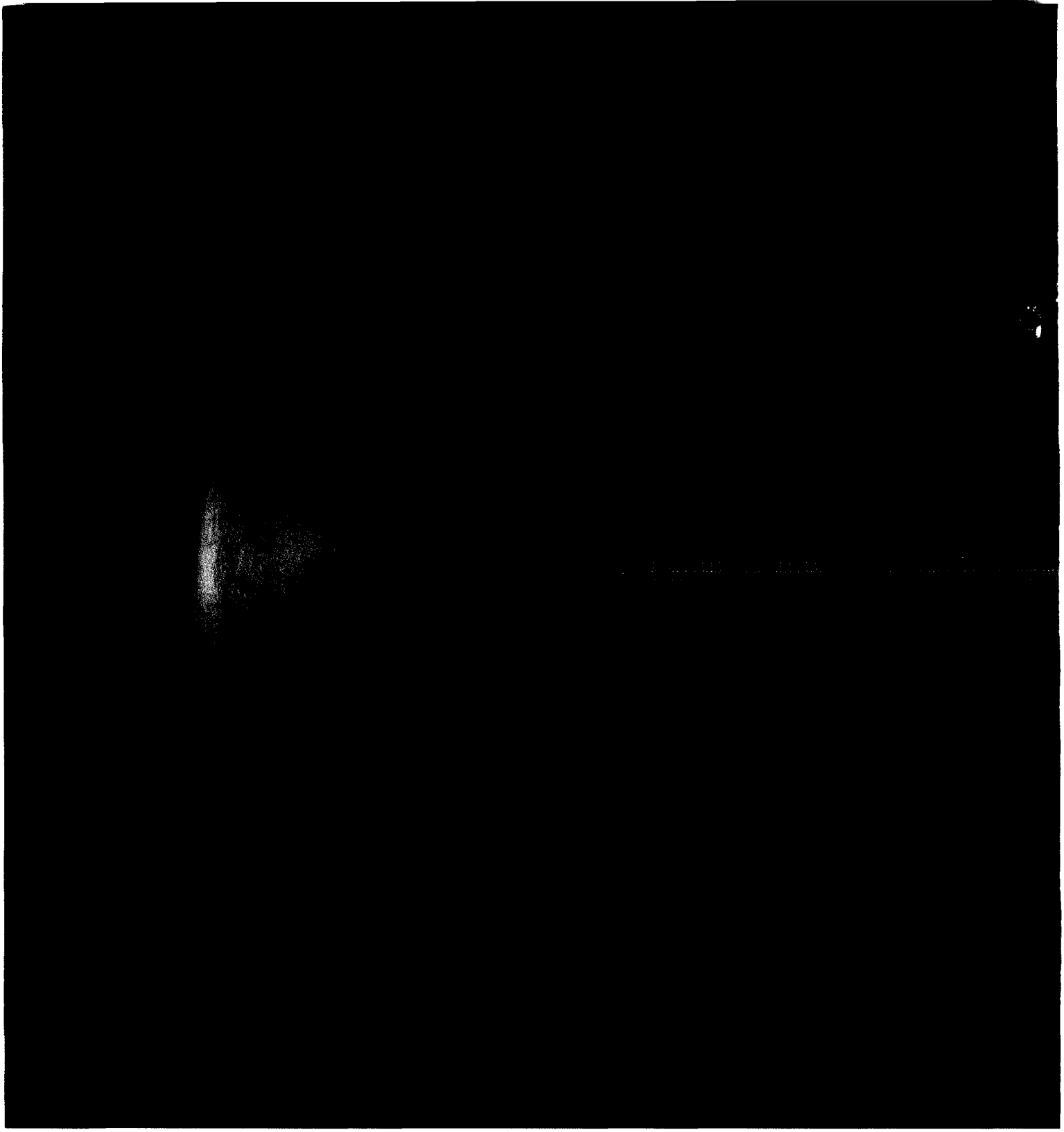

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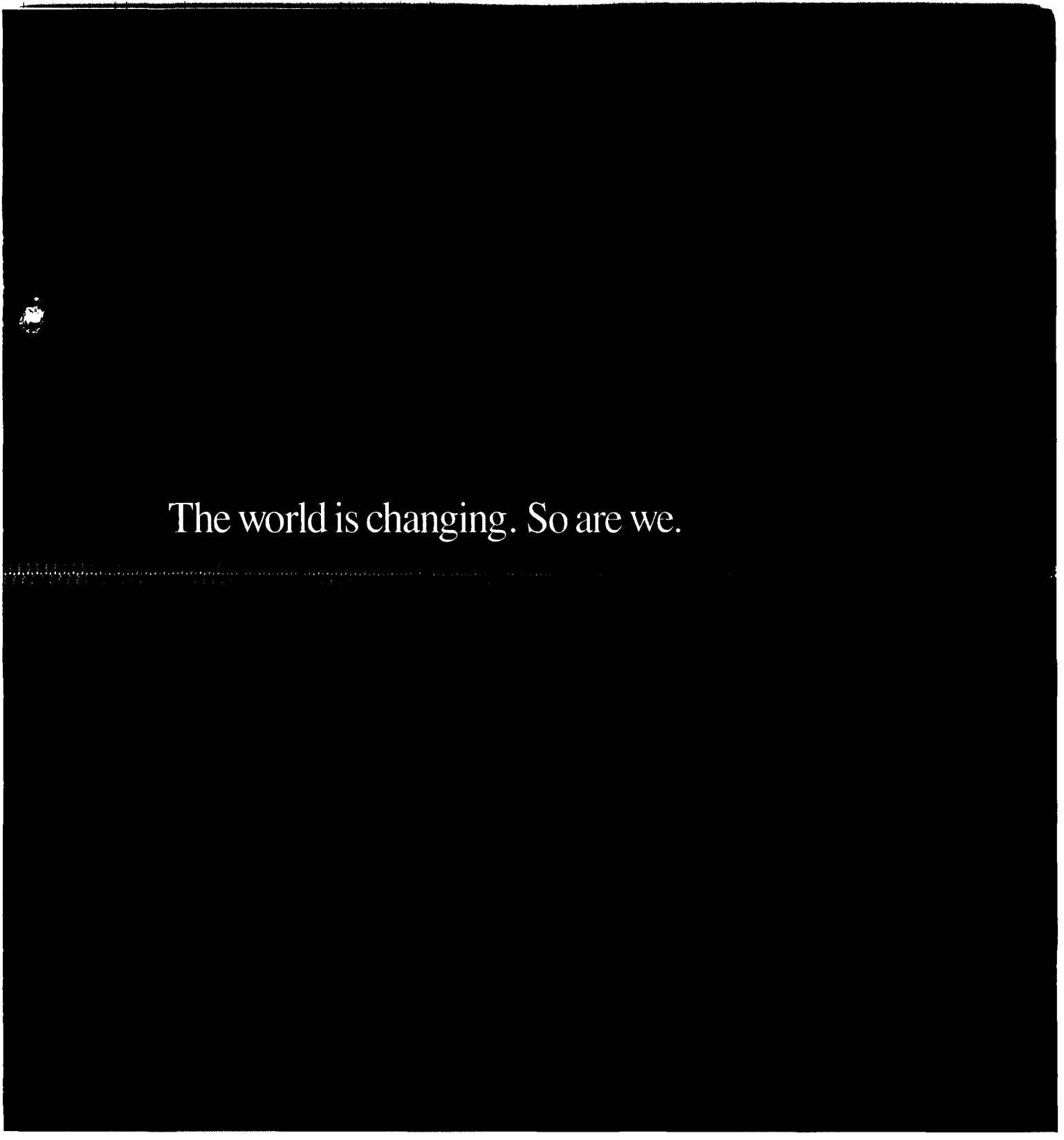


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incomes, in order to finance such investments. The first assumes productivity trickles down; the second assumes productivity bubbles up.

I don't mean to overstate the contrast. The Clinton plan incorporates a few targeted tax incentives; the Bush plan would enlarge public research and development. More importantly, neither plan would substantially reduce the budget deficit directly. Both rely on economic growth as the primary means of cutting the deficit, in contrast to the Perot-Tsongas-Rudman austerity school, which holds that deficit reduction is the means to growth. Not surprisingly, I side with Bush and Clinton on this. An emphasis on growth rather than austerity is entirely appropriate now, given currently high levels of unemployment and underutilized industrial and office capacity. Too rapid and radical an attempt at reducing the deficit could transform the current recession into a full-blown depression. Perot-Tsongas-Rudman may be overemphasizing the deficit problem even over the longer term. In a global capital market, government deficits don't completely crowd out private savings, which move easily across borders. The real issue is whether the global savings create good jobs here.

Yet although they seem to treat the deficit similarly, here too lies an important difference: Clinton's anticipated deficits are matched by public investment; Bush's are applied to public spending. Borrowing from the future in order to invest in the future is entirely appropriate because it makes future Americans who will bear the cost of the additional borrowing that much more productive. Borrowing from the future to prop up current living standards, on the other hand, is indefensible, because it merely transfers burdens to the future. (In the late nineteenth century, the United States as a whole was far more indebted than today, relative to its national income. But because our great-grandparents borrowed to build canals, railways, schools, roads, and the other foundations of a modern economy, the debt was paid off with relative ease by the early years of this century.)

The real issue here, after all, is the living standards of future Americans—their capacities for full and productive lives. Bill Clinton and George Bush represent two fundamentally different ideas about how to achieve that end. Election-year politics during a recession tends to obscure the choice. Yet it is crucial that in the coming months Americans grasp what is at stake. •

**The beaching of the Republican Party.**

# THE END OF CONSERVATISM

*By John B. Judis*

When conservatives repeatedly declare that George Bush's failures as president are the result of his having spurned their ideas and movement, they are harboring illusions born of their fleeting success under Ronald Reagan. In fact, the conservative movement that carried Reagan to victory barely exists any longer; it has dissipated into various cantankerous and confused factions; and the ideas associated with it have become obsolete, discredited, or heavily in dispute among conservatives themselves.

It is not even clear any longer what it would mean for Bush to follow conservatives' advice. Should he listen to Massachusetts Governor William Weld or the Rev. Pat Robertson on the subject of abortion and family values? Should he give priority to Jack Kemp's proposals for cutting taxes or to Senator Phil Gramm's urgings to reduce the budget deficit? Should he pay attention to Representative Vin Weber's words on free trade or to Pat Buchanan's warnings about unfair Japanese trade tactics? Should he derive his foreign policy from *Commentary* or *Chronicles*?

As a generic political category, of course, conservatives have not disappeared from American politics. Indeed, there have always been politicians and intellectuals in America who could be described as "conservatives"—from John Adams and Daniel Webster to Irving Babbitt and Robert Taft—but until the mid-1950s there was no common body of "conservative" political ideas or any movement that was called "conservative." Instead, conservatives and the right consisted of disconnected and often feuding factions that could claim few common causes.

What has happened over the last five years is that American conservatives—who created a coherent movement about thirty-five years ago and won national power in 1980—have slipped back into the chaos and impotence that prevailed before the mid-'50s. They now bear far more resemblance to the conservatives of 1952 than to the conservatives of 1964 or 1980. And that, perhaps, is the real reason for Bush's sputtering administration.

In the early 1950s the different factions that were identified with the right or with conservatives included isola-



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tionists strongly opposed to American participation in NATO and to American entry into the Korean War; protectionists favoring the retention of the prohibitive Smoot-Hawley tariff; nativists, anti-Semites, and racists worried about the subversion of white, Anglo-Saxon Christian culture; anti-democratic, neo-feudal, and neo-Confederate reactionaries railing against urban industrialism; small businessmen worried that the New and Fair Deals represented the first step toward a Soviet America; libertarians distrustful of a new national security state; McCarthy and McCarthyite anti-Communists fearful that the United States was about to be taken over by the world Communist conspiracy; and Ivy League Republicans who called themselves the "new conservatives" and favored a moderate politics modeled on Burke and Disraeli.

There was an impassable gulf between the Burkean conservatism of McGeorge Bundy or Robert Taft (who sponsored a public housing bill and rejected the label "conservative") and the racist populism of Gerald L. K. Smith; but there was also a chasm between the libertarians and the McCarthyites and between the isolationists and the anti-Communist internationalists. In the 1952 presidential election, conservatives and the right were deeply split over Eisenhower and Taft. Much of the old right favored Taft while the new anti-Communists, including McCarthy, Whittaker Chambers, and Barry Goldwater, supported Eisenhower. Some Southern conservatives, concerned about the Republican Party's ties to Lincoln, even backed Adlai Stevenson. The right in 1952 was all cacophony and no melody.

Yet a decade later a powerful and recognizable conservative movement had come into being. It got its name from Russell Kirk's *The Conservative Mind*, but it derived its thrust largely from the efforts of an improbable group of former leftists and of William F. Buckley Jr.'s *National Review*. These conservatives located the new movement on the right wing of America's cold war internationalist consensus—a consensus based on the idea that democratic America was the leader of a free world alliance against world communism. To achieve this redefinition, the new conservatives had to demonstrate the overarching importance of the Communist threat; they also had to kick the isolationists, protectionists, anti-Semites, and nativists out of their movement.

No book was more important in establishing the new movement's understanding of communism than Chambers's *Witness*. In this memoir of his experience as a Communist spy, Chambers portrayed the struggle against communism as an apocalyptic battle of good against evil and God against Satan. At the same time, he drew an intimate connection between the struggle against communism and that against Democratic liberalism. "When I took up my little sling and aimed at Communism, I also hit something else," Chambers wrote. "What I hit was the force of that great Socialist revolution which in the name of *liberalism*, spasmodically, incompletely, somewhat formlessly, but always in the same direction, has been inching its ice cap over the nation for two decades." Three decades later Ronald Reagan could still recite by heart this passage from *Witness*.

Chambers, McCarthy, James Burnham, and Richard Nixon made the conservative case for an internationalist strategy against communism and for the creation of a national security leviathan. Buckley at *National Review* was singularly responsible for distinguishing the new conservatives—who included Jews and Irish Catholics in their leadership—from the nativists and anti-Semites of the old right. In 1959 Buckley announced that anyone on the masthead of *National Review* could not also be on the masthead of the increasingly anti-Semitic *American Mercury* and that *National Review*'s editors would no longer write for the magazine. Applauding Buckley's move, Chambers wrote him, "Now what is good and strong outside us can draw to us. The dregs will be drawn to the dregs, and sink where they belong."

The new conservative movement contained different factions within it, but they were always subordinated to the larger anti-Communist, anti-liberal consensus that Chambers had first sketched out. The new conservatives included New Deal critics like Milton Friedman who had nonetheless embraced the New Dealers' free trade economics; traditionalists like Kirk who were worried about the moral corruption engendered by the spread of market values; and defenders of the racial status quo such as Virginian James J. Kilpatrick, who attacked *Brown* v. *Board of Education* in the name of states' rights. These intellectuals influenced a new generation of politicians led by Goldwater, and the politicians in turn mediated between the intellectuals and the general electorate.

Goldwater, for instance, began as a conventional small business conservative—more concerned about Walter Reuther than Nikita Khrushchev—but was molded by Buckley's brother-in-law Brent Bozell (who ghosted Goldwater's 1960 classic *Conscience of a Conservative*) into a militant anti-Communist. Then, when Goldwater ran for president in 1964, conservatives discovered from his vote that conservatism had its most loyal following among Deep South whites opposed to the civil rights movement.

Over the next two decades, the movement adopted new political strategies and incorporated new constituencies without altering its underlying worldview. What Kevin Phillips first called the "New Right" represented a change in political tactics rather than philosophy. Inspired by Goldwater's showing and by George Wallace's success among Northern as well as Southern whites, New Right activists such as Richard Viguerie and Paul Weyrich called for conservatives to use social issues to lure erstwhile Democrats into supporting candidates who upheld the core conservative convictions about communism and liberalism. In 1978 Howard Phillips, a Jew, convinced Protestant fundamentalists to set up the Moral Majority.

The neoconservatives, identified most closely with Norman Podhoretz's *Commentary* and Irving Kristol's



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*The Public Interest,* blunted the older right's hostility to the New Deal, making affirmative action and the Office of Economic Opportunity rather than Social Security and the Tennessee Valley Authority the objects of conservatives' wrath. The supply-side economists and their supporters at *The Wall Street Journal* invented an economics that they claimed would allow conservatives to cut taxes for the upper and middle classes without increasing the deficit. Echoing John Kennedy, they promised that their rising fiscal tide would lift all boats.

In 1980 the conservatives' message, transmitted by Reagan, fit perfectly Americans' growing fears of national decline: Reagan's militant anti-communism promised to erase the memory of Vietnam and to counteract a Soviet arms buildup; his supply-side economics appeared to be the solution to a decade of Keynesian stagflation; his opposition to busing and affirmative action a response to the gathering white backlash; and his support for family and community an answer to two decades of social and sexual experimentation. Reagan's message, Podhoretz wrote afterward, was that "the decline of America ... is a consequence of bad policies pursued by the government and can therefore be reversed by shifting to other policies."

Reagan's landslide victory seemed to augur the beginning of a conservative realignment comparable in depth and scope to the New Deal realignment of 1932, but the big shift never took place. Instead, within a decade, the conservative movement ran aground. For the first time since 1960, the movement had no agreed-upon national leader. Its factions were not merely feuding but attempting to read each other out of the movement. And its ties to its popular base were becoming increasingly tenuous. Why did this occur?

Most obviously, the end of the cold war removed the movement's underlying focus and rationale. Without the priority of national defense, existing squabbles over federal spending, appointments, arts policy, and school prayer suddenly became major conflicts. More importantly, older conflicts that had been suppressed or temporarily resolved during the cold war resurfaced. Conservatives began fighting over foreign aid, immigration, Israel, and even Jewish influence in terms little different from 1948. Just as conservatives like Merwin K. Hart had tried to discredit Roosevelt's and Truman's policies by associating them with prominent Jews, conservative Pat Buchanan tried to discredit foreign policy positions by linking them to Jewish proponents.

The noisiest quarrel occurred between the conservatives and a group of traditionalists including Buchanan and Kirk who called themselves "paleoconservatives." As early as 1982, the two factions were bickering over who should be appointed to head the National Endowment for the Humanities, but with the cold war gone, a typical movement turf battle escalated into an all-out war. The paleocons accused the neocons of being crypto-socialists and of mistaking, in Kirk's words, "Tel Aviv for the capital of the United States." Neocon Richard John Neuhaus accused the paleocons of reviving "the forbidden bigotries once confused with conservatism."

The movement was further fragmented rather than unified by paleocon Buchanan's presidential candidacy this year. The neocons, backed by *The American Spectator* and leading congressional conservatives, called on conservatives to repudiate Buchanan. *Human Events* and some of Robertson's lieutenants from 1988 supported Buchanan wholeheartedly. Other conservative publications and organizations waffled and vacillated. In a December essay in *National Review,* Buckley acknowledged that Buchanan's statements "amounted to anti-Semitism," but on the eve of the New Hampshire primary, the magazine, with Buckley's concurrence, urged a "tactical vote" for Buchanan. The Heritage Foundation's Edwin Feulner branded both Buchanan's charges against the neocons and their charges against him "insane."

The movement was equally afflicted by the failure of conservative economics to stem the decline of the American economy. Instead of creating a healthy prosperity, Reagan's supply-side policies led to a transient debt-driven boom that was accompanied by record trade and budget deficits and by a slight drop in real wages. When the recession began, some conservatives finally acknowledged that the American economy was in relative decline but insisted that the fault lay in insufficiently or imperfectly carrying out their prescriptions. They wanted a return to the gold standard or further reductions in taxes on the wealthy.

A few others who acknowledged the decline began to embrace active government intervention in investment and trade. Conservative business groups like the Business and Industrial Council called for the government to protect American manufacturers against cheap foreign imports. The policy differences between these groups and the organizations still committed to Reaganomics loomed as large as the differences between Democrats and Republicans.

In addition, many conservative intellectuals—and some political leaders, including Kemp—simply refused to acknowledge that the United States was declining. *Wall Street Journal* editorial page editor Robert Bartley maintained that the budget deficits of the '80s were "grossly overrated" and that the trade deficits were "meaningless and misleading." George Gilder wrote an article for *Policy Review* titled "More Imports, Please." And many of the neoconservatives, who had been oblivious to economics, now insisted that the spread of American democratic ideas and popular culture demonstrated that America was still on the rise. Writing in *Commentary,* however, Francis Fukuyama dismissed these arguments. "As with a star that has gone supernova," he wrote, "the light emanating from the United States continues to shine brightly at the periphery of the universe, where it is observed by various Russians, Chinese, Lithuanians, and the like; but the energy at the core is rapidly extinguishing."

In the past, heated debate over these questions might have been a sign of political health and ferment, but in



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this case it was not. Like the conservative debates over Buchanan's anti-Semitism, they were symptomatic of a movement increasingly trapped within its own past, forced to conduct strenuous debates in order to demonstrate what was obvious to any outsider not encumbered by unkept promises and outworn ideological categories.

There has also been a growing gap between conservatives and their base on such social issues as abortion and parental leave. Of course, the fit was never perfect. In the '60s Buckley had opposed state prohibition of abortion; Reagan, as governor of California, signed one of the nation's most permissive abortion laws; and the libertarian Goldwater has always opposed government meddling in personal life. It was the New Right's success in winning over the fundamentalists that convinced many conservatives to close ranks around the evangelicals' view of women and the family.

But as the fundamentalists, led by Jerry Falwell and Robertson, formed organizations of their own and began issuing edicts, running candidates, and taking over local Republican committees in the name of God, their support became a distinct liability. The first clear danger signs came in the 1985 gubernatorial election in Virginia when Democratic candidate Gerald Baliles wounded his conservative Republican opponent simply by accusing him of being linked to the Virginia-based televangelists. By 1988 Democrats were taking any chance they could to tie the Republicans to fundamentalists, and conservative Republicans, once enthusiastic, began to become queasier about their identification with the movement.

What conservatives were discovering was that they had aligned themselves with a movement that was genuinely reactionary and that by its nature would dwindle rather than grow. Since the 1920s religious fundamentalists have been trying unsuccessfully to reverse the development of capitalism, which has progressively freed families and particularly women from centuries of bondage to home and soil and opened up to the broad middle classes areas of personal freedom and discretion previously enjoyed only by the upper classes.

While some older conservatives like Kristol have increasingly identified with the fundamentalist critique of modern society—last year Kristol published an extended polemic in *Commentary* against "secular humanism"—younger conservatives on campus and on congressional staffs tend to be far more cosmopolitan in their attitudes. According to one estimate, about 50 percent of the members of Ivy League conservative organizations and about 75 percent of the Washington Bush-Quayle staff are pro-choice. And many Washington conservatives such as *Policy Review* editor Adam Meyerson see Massachusetts's pro-choice, pro-gay rights Governor Weld as a promising presidential choice. If Weld should run, then conservatives can be expected to begin debating abortion and even gay rights as heatedly as they now debate immigration or foreign aid. Still new factions will proliferate.

Some conservatives recognize that their movement has lost its moorings, but few have any clear answers about what to do next. In the latest *Policy Review*, Weber acknowledges an "idea vacuum" among Republicans and conservatives, but his main answer is for conservatives to press for a capital gains tax. Most of the paleoconservatives recognize that Buchanan was not really presidential material, but without a national leader, they remain a protest movement within what is rapidly becoming a collection of protest movements. Acknowledging the absence of a national leader, *Washington Times* columnist Sam Francis, the movement's guru, tries to make a virtue of necessity. "The definition of right-wing populism is that some guy comes out of nowhere," he says.

Many younger Washington conservatives believe that by running for president in 1996, Kemp could revive the conservative movement. At a private gathering of young conservatives held last month, the host asked how many of them would be willing to follow Kemp out of the Republican Party if he ran. Three-fourths raised their hands, including several who were working for the Bush-Quayle campaign. But as Kemp demonstrated in 1988, he may be ill-suited to be a Republican presidential candidate. His conservative war on poverty has played poorly among grass-roots Republican audiences, and his continued commitment to supply-side illusions about the budget and trade deficit could distance him from almost every other voter.

*American Spectator* editor Robert Tyrrell's solution to what he calls the "conservative crack-up" is an infusion of new belief from converted liberals, but if anything, the movement of conversion seems to be going in the other direction. Several of the movement's more promising neoconservatives, including Joshua Muravchik of the American Enterprise Institute and Penn Kemble of Freedom House, are leaning toward Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton. Others I have met are doing so privately.

As Bush enters his last political campaign, he has suffered as much from the conservatives' decline as they have from his. Though Bush has hewed a largely independent course on foreign policy (where he has been most successful as president), he has shamelessly followed whatever wind is blowing the strongest on economic and social policy. Conservatives now cite his betrayal of his promise not to raise taxes as a prime example of his ignoring their advice, but conservatives were silent between June 1990, when Bush announced he was breaking his pledge, and October, when the first budget agreement was introduced. And rightly so, since they had no better answer for how to reduce the deficit.

Conservatives' repudiation of Bush is part of their own self-denial. By pretending that he is entirely separate from them, they can delude themselves into thinking his defeat will not reflect on their own political future. But it will: Bush lacks a domestic policy, and the Republicans lack what Weber calls a "coherent national agenda," because the conservatives, who provided both policy and agenda for the party over the last decade, are no longer capable of doing so. •



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# BOOKS & The Arts

## *Stanley Kauffmann on Films*

### Private and Public Wars

Eric Rohmer is a minimalist but of a peculiar kind. Minimalism, let's say, is a method of understatement, of implication in extremis, opposed to explication in any sense. Rohmer's cinematic methods—his framing, his editing within a scene, his ellipses between scenes—are all brilliantly minimalist; but the decor of any one shot is intensely detailed, and the dialogue of his screenplays is disquisitional. Two people who have recently met can talk for three or four minutes about their feelings for each other, as they do in his latest film, then kiss, then talk for another three or four minutes about that one kiss. The action is spare; the texture of the discourse around it is neo-Cartesian. It's enjoyable.

**Tale of Springtime** (Orion Classics), Rohmer's latest, is the first of a new series. The first and best series was *Six Moral Tales* (*My Night at Maud's* and *Claire's Knee* among them); then came the six films of the *Comedies and Proverbs* series. (Between those two series came the masterly *The Marquise of O . . . .*) His new film launches a new series: *Tales of the Four Seasons.* It's hard to see how some of these films couldn't have been in the other series, but if this taxonomy is useful to Rohmer, that's enough.

Paris again. And again Rohmer enjoys the way that commonplace events can lead to odd situations. A philosophy teacher in her late 20s, played by Anne Teyssèdre, goes to a party and there meets a music student some ten years younger, Florence Darel. The two converse because they are both bored at the party. Darel invites Teyssèdre back to the flat she shares with her father, who is rarely there, and the two women, though of differing maturity, become friendly and frank with each other.

The story then takes them to Darel's country place and to an encounter with her father, Hugues Quester, and his lover, Eloise Bennett. Darel hates Bennett, and she arranges matters, when the chance arises, so that Teyssèdre and her father are left alone together, hoping that her new friend may replace Bennett.

Also involved in the story are four other people, only one of whom is seen: Darel's (divorced) mother, Teyssèdre's lover, Darel's lover, and Bennett's other lover. A missing necklace is also involved as another counter in a game of suspicion and accident, of sexual and temperamental interplay, of the limitations of candor.

It would be straining to try to infer a realized theme from this film—or, for that matter, from its title. Its rewards are in the grave simplicity with which Rohmer has directed it and in the quality of the conversation. (A slight touch of bravura here. Teyssèdre drops a reference to Gyges's ring, from Book Two of *The Republic*, and this is certainly the only screenplay in world film history to use the word "maieutic.")

Rohmer's cast is acutely selected. Partly because they are unfamiliar—true of most people in his latter-day films—they seem to be non-actors who have been chosen for personal aptness rather than for acting talent. They are not maladroit and may, for all I know, be celebrated in France; but they give this film a suggestion of disclosed privacy rather than of created art. This, added to Rohmer's cinematic asceticism, has a wry result: even when his films aren't overwhelmingly interesting, they have some interest.

**Cup Final** (Local), given its American theatrical premiere at the Film Forum in New York, is the best Israeli film I've seen. This is a small superlative: I've seen only about two dozen. Most of them have been crudely made or are abjectly imitative, poorly performed or too actorishly performed, heavily sentimental or heavily ironic.

However, one quality in some of those films is remarkable: the degree to which they see Israel's enemies humanely, sympathetically. That quality is central to *Cup Final*, which takes place during the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in June 1982 and focuses on the relations between an Israeli soldier and a unit of eight PLO fighters who capture him. The PLO people are treated with much more than fairness, with clear perception of their motives and hatreds and their resolve to fight.

The one important trouble with the film is its shape. Essentially, this is one more neat little morality play utilizing an abstracted small group to allegorize larger matters. The Palestinians are an assorted lot, reflecting different types and intelligences. One of them, played

### FILMS WORTH SEEING

**The Best Intentions.** *Bille August's comprehending direction and a (mostly) sterling cast illuminate this screenplay by Ingmar Bergman about his parents' courtship and early marriage. Intelligent, painful, true. (Reviewed 8/10/92)* **Howards End.** *Vanessa Redgrave, Emma Thompson, and Anthony Hopkins are excellent in this sensitive adaptation of E. M. Forster. James Ivory's best directing. (3/23/92)* **A League of Their Own.** *Comedy about the female professional baseball league during World War II. Geena Davis and Tom Hanks get some laughs and heart-tugs out of a workaday script. (8/3/92)* **Monster in a Box.** *Spalding Gray recounts his adventures while writing his recent novel. (The manuscript is the monster that he carried with him in a box.) A witty, perceptive one-man show. (7/6/92)* **—SK**



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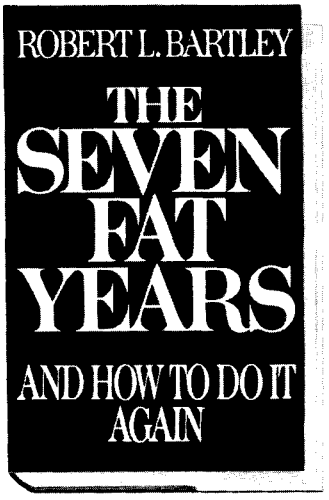


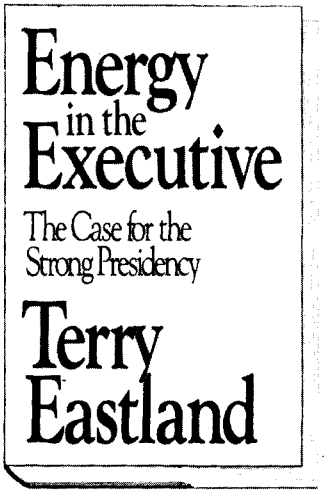


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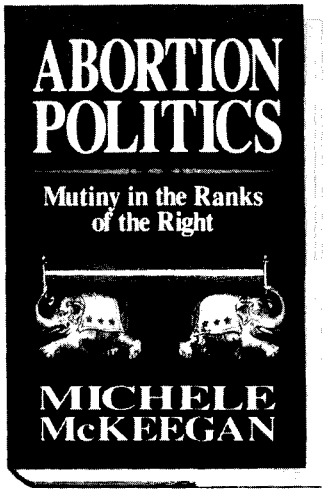


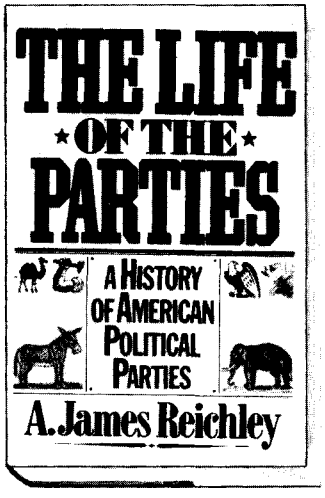


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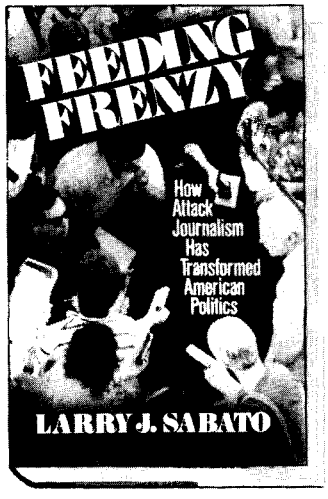


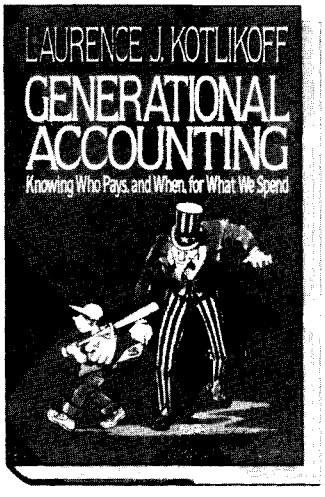


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with dry wit by Suheil Haddad, is a nonpracticing doctor, here a fighter. Into this Lost Patrol mixture is plunged the Israeli captive, played with slightly overdrawn common-man homeliness by Moshe Ivgi. The leader of the Palestinians is done by Muhamad Bakri, who looks like a younger Raf Vallone. He and the Israeli find a bond between them—their interest in the World Cup football tourney at that moment being played in Spain, and their enthusiasm for the Italian team. Inevitably, and not too painfully, flare-ups of hatred between the two men, flare-ups of killing along the way, are laced with radio reports, even an occasional TV glimpse in someone's house, of the football matches.

The Palestinians want to get Ivgi to Beirut, where, for some reason, he will be worth money to them, which they need. Like all good Lost Patrol films, it is symbolic; and some of its symbolism is in the dwindling of principals along the way as various people get killed off.

But the whole film is made insistent and telling by the director, Eran Riklis (whose original idea was turned into a screenplay by Eyad Halfon). Riklis, born in Jerusalem in 1954, had much of his education abroad and graduated from an English film school in 1981. He has worked as a cinematographer, has made a number of documentaries and one previous fiction feature. *Cup Final*, done in 1991, has been shown at more than a dozen festivals around the world and has won some prizes. Prominent in the comment about it has been the recognition, deserved, of the even-handed treatment of all the characters. As a director of actors, this is Riklis's best achievement.

And with his editor, Anat Lubarsky, he has kept his film concise and fluid, making the most of the landscape of battle—including ruined buildings—without crude emphasis, treating the sudden deaths that punctuate the story with a bitter combination of the expected and the surprising. If Riklis can free himself from reliance on trite screenplay patterns, he could become Israel's first filmmaker to win serious world recognition. •

**The professor, the transvestite, and the meaning of clothes.**

# *Dragtime*

**BY ANNE HOLLANDER**

Early in her fat book, Marjorie Garber poses the question that clearly inspired it: "Why have cultural observers today been so preoccupied with cross-dressing? Why is it virtually impossible to pick up a newspaper or turn on the television or go to the movies without encountering, in some guise, the question of sartorial gender-bending?" She then offers some evidence: "In the last two years, Phil Donahue has broadcast at least sixteen programs on cross-dressing and transsexualism and Geraldo Rivera more than seven." She points to movies of the 1980s based on the theme (*Tootsie, Yentl, Victor/Victoria*), along with many others that refer to it in passing, and goes on to sketch a recent rise in transvestism and transsexuality as subjects of intense academic interest. "What are we to make," she wants to know, "of this evidence of what Freud might have called an 'overestimation' of cross-dressing, in high culture and low, as a phenomenon of our time?"

In case her theme doesn't strike everyone as quite so salient as she finds it, Garber, a professor of English at Harvard, makes it loom especially large by stretching the name of her main character, to mean the creature who comes into existence whenever any person of one sex is clad in any form or any part of the other's dress, in life or in art, for any length of time, and under any circumstances. Since something of this kind has been happening fairly often in the long history of culture high and low, Garber can make much of her central character not just as a current preoccupation, but as a recurrent presence. The figure can be both Cary Grant momentarily wearing a frilly negligee in *Bringing up Baby* and also Dr. James Barry, inspector general of the Medical Department of the British army, who, after serving for more than forty years as a physician and surgeon, was discovered to be a woman on her death in 1865.

*Vested Interests:*
*Cross-Dressing & Cultural Anxiety*
by Marjorie Garber
(Routledge, 443 pp., $35)

The term "cross-dressing," a recent word coined to replace "transvestism" with something more respectable-sounding and also to enlarge its scope, certainly does well for such a study as this, which wants to link together Boy George, Shakespeare's boy-heroines, Madonna, Lawrence of Arabia, Jan Morris, Lucy Snow in Charlotte Brontë's *Villette*, Peter Pan, George Sand, and the 350 transvestite members of the Tiffany Club of Waltham, Massachusetts—"mostly male, middle class, and 90 percent married." A single new subject has been created out of various broad and ancient strands in civilized life. It has been isolated for theoretical scrutiny, sometimes in spite of the variegated textures from which its threads have been plucked. Since the subject involves sex at its most visible—that is, in clothes—the result is naturally sensational, and this large book, filled with startling lore and vivid anecdotes, carefully tries to make it even more so.

In behalf of her protagonist, Garber makes both a plea and a claim. The plea is that the transvestite be looked directly *at* as a separate phenomenon, a complete figure, and not looked *through*, as a fleeting circumstance in an ordinary female or male existence. The claim is that this distinct figure fills an important role in collective emotional life, and hence in all of cultural life—that it does creative work in direct proportion to its disturbing power. Garber finds her personage appearing in art as a signal of what she calls a "category crisis," a moment in a given "text" when established cultural boundaries of any kind, not only sexual, are being crossed or put in doubt. The transvestite thus stands for, or "marks," any transgressive leap that creates culture itself; or as she puts it, "Transvestism is a space of possibility structuring and confounding culture; the disruptive element that intervenes, not just a category of male and female, but the crisis of category itself.... The transvestite is the figure of and for that crisis, the uncanny supplement that marks the place of desire."

Garber reiterates to clarify her terms:

> By "category crisis" I mean a failure of definitional distinction, a borderline that becomes permeable, that permits of border crossing from one (apparently distinct) category to another: black/white... noble/bourgeois... master/slave. The binarism male/female ... is itself put in question or under erasure in transvestism, and a transvestite figure, or a transvestite mode, will always function as a sign of overdetermination—a mechanism of displacement from one blurred boundary to another.

ANNE HOLLANDER is the author of *Seeing Through Clothes* (Viking) and *Moving Pictures* (Harvard University Press).



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She further specifies, a little more comprehensibly, the larger goal of her enterprise:

> One of the most important aspects of cross-dressing is the way it offers a challenge to easy notions of binarity, putting into question the categories of "female" and "male" whether they are considered essential or constructed, biological or cultural. The current popularity of cross-dressing as a theme in art and criticism represents, I think, an undertheorized recognition of the necessary critique of binary thinking, whether particularized as male and female, black and white, yes and no, Republican and Democrat, self and other, or in any other way.

With this book, Garber clearly aims to "theorize" that "recognition" properly, although she never once explains why a "critique of binary thinking" is necessary. I wonder what she makes of night and day?

Garber sees a persistent uneasiness, the "cultural anxiety" of the subtitle, clouding the true perception of the transvestite's significance, and repeatedly causing this powerful figure to be explained away or otherwise made to disappear. Authors or screenwriters, for example, who make a character put on garments meant for the other sex will also make the effect entirely provisional, whether it's absurdly comic or tactically necessary, and they will be sure to reverse it by the end of the story, so that the character's original sex is restored and the ephemeral "transvestite" seems never to have existed.

The point of the book is made through citing uneasy responses to transvestism. This often means, however, that Garber must spot transvestism when it is posing as something else, or is suggested only in partial effects. Since the figure of the transvestite has been thus isolated on purpose to illustrate how desperate people are to preserve all the boundaries that transvestism allegedly challenges, more has to be firmly called transvestism than firmly is in order to support the idea of a general blindness to it and denial of it, along with its importance. By the end of the book she is calling the recurrence of the transvestite figure a return of the repressed.

Any time a woman in history, literature, or cinema has cut off her hair or momentarily put on pants, or a man has put on an apron, painted his face, or hidden his male identity in a kerchief and skirt, Garber sees this huge personage coming to life, pregnant with crisis, especially when any practical reasons for the other-sex costume are being insisted on. Her section called "The Transvestite's Progress" is laden with stories, true and fictional, of transvestites who say that they only did it to get the job, or to make an escape or a journey, or to survive in a hostile environment—to "make progress" of some kind. Garber sees all explanations, not just some of them, as denials. She also rejects the idea that a provisional transvestite condition might be a liberating, enlightening, or creative phase of a distinctly male or female life, or a comic moment with a delicate rather than a thundering resonance.

LAURENCE OLIVIER AS KATHERINA IN *THE TAMING OF THE SHREW*

Linked to this claim for the power of the transvestite is another appeal, a brief for the right understanding of gay culture. She observes that transvestite displays have been linked by the public, sometimes wrongly, to homosexual life, and also that they have been ghettoized, marginalized, medicalized, sociologized, explained out of existence, or actively persecuted even while that same public finds them perpetually fascinating. Her aim is also to sort out the truth of transvestism's role in gay life, restate its meaning, and reclaim its true cultural function for the whole of society.

Garber tells us a great deal about the details of life led in gay and lesbian gear of different sorts, and writes fully about the inside politics of clothing among homosexuals, often in somewhat impenetrable language. She describes the minutiae of the drag world, and has a long section on the ultimate and irreversible transvestites, the transsexuals. Homosexuality and transvestism are rightly shown to be separate though related subjects; but the two are obviously connected in the public mind, which not only wants to know how to tell male from female, but how to tell straight from gay. Garber has wished to show at great length how small-minded and unworthy are both those desires, along with the desire to determine anyone's "real gender."

Belief in the illusory quality of "gender categories" is fundamental to this study. Such a belief seems natural enough in a time when the model for existence is a flickering screen where apparently solid objects are known to be made only of tiny, soluble, and quickly reformable streaks of light, and perception follows the same pattern. The notion has easily arisen that there "is" nothing, that we "see" and "know" nothing, that our vision and knowledge have been put together, just like existence itself, out of easily dispersed and reassembled bits. Maleness and femaleness are no exception. The current suspicion is that we may not only *wear* temporary masks, or even lifelong ones, but that we all *are* masks, deceptively solid shapes of concocted imagery easily reconcocted like everything else. According to that notion, our bodies are certainly no more authentic than our clothes.

Thus, for Garber, it is hopelessly wrong, or lamentably insufficient, to go on insisting that most people are either male or female, however they may dress or otherwise behave. If we look at the transvestite as Garber wants us to, we



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must see something neither male nor female, we must see a theoretical "third." Garber says: "The third is that which questions binary thinking and introduces crisis ... a mode of articulation, a way of describing a space of possibility. Three puts in question the idea of one: of identity, self-sufficiency, self-knowledge." Later on: "The transvestite makes culture possible ... there can be no culture without the transvestite because the transvestite marks the entrance into the Symbolic" (which is Lacan's definition of the "third").

Although Garber goes devotedly to the movies and concentrates on aspects of the theater, she apparently looks carefully at very few pictures, and her illustrations are offered with insulting disrespect. Since they are unnumbered, with no numerical reference to them in the text, no reference to the text in their captions, and no list, it is very hard to make use of them. She even describes some of her own illustrations inaccurately. Although her whole subject is founded on the theme of dress and its manifold power over the inner and outer eye, she seems to flout its actual character and history by being careless of its visual representation, where its meaning has been so consistently expounded.

This study seems to be based on its own kind of blindness. Throughout her book Garber holds to a theoretical apparatus that sheds a rather unenlightening glare, devoid of color, texture, or any trace of warmth, despite her very jokey prose. In all her formulations about transvestism, Western culture seems deprived of its richly uneven and messy continuity, and sexuality seems to have lost its connection with other variable layers of human experience, most especially with visual memory. The most noticeable thing about the dense web of this big book is that it was spun by a literary scholar and theorist: by someone who reads rather than sees, sees mainly to read, and prefers decoding to either reading or seeing.

To study transvestism, I would have thought, you would need a fairly subtle grasp of the flux of fashion through time. Fashion has in fact dealt profoundly with sex since the Middle Ages, creating a fluid system of references and allusions that preserves and recycles much more than it discards or adopts. The changing look of clothes, famous for reflecting the spirit of the moment, is nevertheless built on its own history, most of it dealing with aspects of sexuality. Surely transvestism only means something against this background, which is to say, against a larger background of visual expression. Fashion does not co-opt transvestism from time to time, as Garber suggests. It has always contained it; indeed, it has largely invented it for the modern world.

Moreover, Garber's central notion that male and female sartorial exchange is an image of crisis does not work very well for actual vestimentary expressions in history. Rather than a vision of binary categories being perpetually destabilized by the "realm of the Symbolic," I think that the model of a spectrum or a palimpsest is more fitting for "cross-dressing," as I believe it is for actual sexuality. Male and female clothing has certainly been discussed and described and prescribed and proscribed in fairly rigid and anxious terms, in laws, rules, sermons, and memoranda, in the Old Testament and the New, in letters, satires, and various fictions, some of which are quoted here. But in wear, it has been more complex, and it has behaved much more imaginatively, than any writings reveal.

This fact shows up in pictures, where a stylistic unity, reflecting current visual tolerance, knits together the jarring elements that might appear in whatever current bargain is being struck between male and female bodies and their clothes. Such balance is ignored by writers concentrating on what Garber calls "dissonance." Vested interests have been more discernible in polemical utterances about clothes than on the actual backs of men and women; but it is in such writing, of course, that evidence of "cultural anxiety" can easily be found. In dress itself, contradictory suggestions on several different levels about sexual boldness, common taste, and personal quirk have always been made at one time, some stronger than others. What gets written about is the one thing that pleases or offends, and the writing is what indicates crisis, not the clothes themselves. Everything else about clothes fails to get described or perhaps even noticed, including the harmonizing principle, the gestalt. Much that Garber says about what she calls "transvestite effects" leaves that out, too.

All her examples are accompanied by a great amount of extra lore that thickens the book and captivates the reader without necessarily supporting the theory, so that the cumulative impact comes more from the anecdotes themselves than from their supportive function. Their purpose seems to be an exercise in consciousness-raising, and as such may be welcome; but meanwhile tendentious examples slide by on rhetorical skates. One of these is the figure of Captain Hook in *Peter Pan*, the pirate villain whose seventeenth-century curls and lace collar Garber wants to see as transvestoid gear. But Hook is, in fact, a reminder that references to the other sex are, in dress, perpetually complicated by often independent references to other epochs. Since this book omits the whole dimension of historical allusion in dress, Garber misses Captain Hook as a reference to Charles II, a notorious womanizer and not a transvestish figure at all. Hook is a case of what I would call plain Historical Drag.

Garber's book overflows with the fascinating life stories of individual transvestites from many different periods in the past, but she has omitted most of the visual context of their different historical moments. Before the late eighteenth century, for example, elegant people of both sexes wore scent, rouge, high heels, and wigs, along with lace and brocade, and artificial arrangements to enhance physical shape. Male transvestites such as the famous Chevalier d'Eon looked no more bedizened in their female clothes than respectable gentlemen did in their male ones. Transvestism did not lurk disturbingly in small surface matters, as it has come to do since, and people did not worry about the sexuality of men in lace, spangles, and embroidery. For this reason there was less excitement about actual transvestism, especially for men.

Since the Middle Ages European fashion, like clothes all over the world, has always differentiated between the sexes, but even more sharply among the classes. Though different in shape, the dress of men and women was once made out of the same stuff, constructed according to the same principles by the same craftsmen, and it had the same degree of richness or plainness, which differed according to rank and region, not sex. Beginning in the late seventeenth century and culminating in the late eighteenth century, however, the elegant clothing of men and women came to be increasingly divided. With the ascendancy of the Romantic movement, elegant feminine dress became fantasized and theatricalized, literary and legendary, full of historical and mythological allusion; it was made by female dressmakers and milliners out of a wholly feminine repertoire of delicate materials and embellishments following rules of design that concentrated on variable surface effects.

Men's tailoring, still in the hands of male craftsmen, continued to evolve constantly as it had always done, but it began to change in the direction of simplification, concentrating less on the



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ornamental breaking up of surface and more on the subtle relations of basic form, using matte textures in simple planes, as if to imitate fundamental natural structure and morphology, the character of earth and rock, the way practical architecture did. Women preferred, by contrast, to fill the role of fanciful statuary and ornamental water, of leaves and clouds, of shifting visions and dreams. "Natural man" was thus fully created in clothes by the end of the eighteenth century, along with "fictional woman," or Woman, as she came to be styled. These changes obviously had a great effect on general notions of theater, and of the expressive gear proper to the two sexes in modern life and art.

Garber has declined to look at the dramatic continuum of fashion history. Instead she talks of fashion mainly as something that contemporary designers think up—and so she has missed the way women's clothes for the entire period have engaged in every sort of transvestism, not just sexual. It is true that male elements have been what modern women's clothes have most often imitated, but that has meant male dress of all kinds, classes, occupations, and historical periods, not just current male counterparts. Female dress has also imitated all sorts of animals, machines, extraterrestrials, bric-a-brac, furniture, ships, plants, and little children—and, of course, all sorts of foreigners, theatrical performers, and historical characters of both sexes. During that same 200-year period, male fashion has made no such moves at all, and has stuck firmly to a first-order, evolutionary, "natural" development. And I would emphasize that the developments in fashion I have described did not reflect intellectual, economic, and political developments, but tended to precede them.

The large topic that Garber repeatedly considers is that of the alleged "construction" of femininity through the agglomeration of artificial parts—makeup, coiffure, dress accessories, corsetting, falsies, and high heels. Modern male-to-female transvestism creates its illusions by these means, forever suggesting, says Garber, that a real woman is actually made of nothing else, prompting some feminists to say that women have been female impersonators for years. "Construction," however, has always been the whole point of fashion for both sexes. Dress works as any visual art does: it draws on unconscious fantasy to create material projections that sustain imaginative health. The very function of clothing is figurative and representational, so the plain forms of


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modern men's clothes are no less the invention of fantasy than the complexities of the women's version. But the opposing sexual imagery displayed by male and female dress in the last two centuries has indicated that only women should actually *seem* invented, or perhaps conjured like so many apparitions. So we have arrived at simple bodily envelopes for men and the showy accoutrements for women that modern male transvestites have so energetically seized on.

Complete drag even further suggests—with the help of reference to the stylized Japanese theater in which all the exquisitely garnished women are really male actors—that only men can be perfect females. Dustin Hoffman in *Tootsie* continued the theme that was brilliantly adumbrated by Jack Lemmon's Daphne ("Nobody's perfect!") in *Some Like It Hot.* The implication is that only men are truly imaginative and universal, both natural and naturally creative; and that the scope of their creativity includes Woman, who can only be perfect if men invent her, even out of their own living selves.

Modern women seeking to escape from such false conceptions of femininity have understandably sought the opposing look of natural existence by adopting (not coyly imitating) male dress, which, since the French Revolution, has seemed to stand for Not-Fashion, for Integrity, for Nature—much more for these things, certainly, than for masculine sexuality. Women have consequently failed to look very kinkily sexy in most modern men's clothes, especially in all the masculine informal wear—pants and shirts, boots and sneakers, sweaters and jackets—that now is the staple of female wardrobes. Only truly fetishistic male gear has given a spicy forbidden look to modern women's male borrowings. For a large portion of the contemporary public, transvestism seems to go only one way. It does not mean a woman in a tuxedo: that's not transvestism, that's just fashion or show business. Transvestism means a man in elaborate drag, an imitation high-style sexy woman with a real penis under the sequins; and at this phenomenon people obviously love to look, to stare and to marvel and to feel the intense power of fetishism, and the force of a redoubled erotic appeal.

There is a long tradition in the history of feminine fashion that does mock male gear in the same erotic spirit, though with different effects. The male evening dress famously worn from time to time by notable stage and screen women is a latter-day example of this practice. The costume has become associated with both sexual license and cultural decadence in this century, mainly because of its flavor of strictly upper-class wickedness. Marlene Dietrich and Josephine Baker wore it; Julie Andrews, imitating them, wore it; Madonna sometimes wears it, always obliged to look licentious in various ways. Now waitresses wear it, too, and a host of mediocre female performers. I propose that this outfit, a centerpiece for Garber's idea of transvestism, is actually entirely feminine. It has been seen so often as a suit for sexually daring women that it doesn't suggest real transvestism at all, and the actual men now wearing it are mostly visible in symphony orchestras. In its white-tie-and-tails version on women, therefore, it has some of the same flavor as Historical Drag, with the additional connotation of feminine sexuality in its more challenging styles, which have always been offered in bits of male gear.

Collection of the National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution

*UNA, LADY TROUBRIDGE* BY ROMAINE BROOKS (1924)

Women adopting masculine dress or parts of it ever since Joan of Arc in the fifteenth century have arranged to look extra erotic in it by implying that the scope of their own sexual fantasies is much larger than the ideas expressed by standard feminine attire, whatever that has been. For many centuries women's clothes combined a great deal of traditional modesty in the form of long gowns and veiled hair with a few grams of allure in the form of restrained décolletage. This mixture reflected the view that women don't really have sexual fantasies; they cannily lend themselves to those men have about them. We may remember that men made the clothes for both sexes until 1675.

When Joan the Maid adopted her scandalous knightly costume, masculine fashion had just developed an extremely erotic style that showed the legs and modeled the figure, permitted flamboyant hats, remarkable shoes, and expressive coiffures. These vigorous reflections of sexual fantasy were not believed to be an appropriate or naturally expressive mode for women, and certainly not for virgin Joan; but ever since then, whatever the form of general fashion, adventurous women have naturally enjoyed laying claim to some or all of the male visual image, now and then letting it be known that demure allure is not the only thing on their minds. Dietrich's modern male evening dress of 1930 had the same thrilling look of libertine dandyism, something not possible in the soft, clinging feminine modes of the moment, even though they were short, free-moving, and easy-fitting; it was the look of the erotic imagination that initiates sexual experiment, that can be aggressive and even cruel, not the look of masculinity itself but of an erotically enterprising femininity.

The 1924 portrait by Romaine Brooks of the lesbian Una, Lady Troubridge, which Garber inadequately describes as showing her "in male attire," is actually another example of creative female adaptation. With her tailored jacket and striped pants (the picture cuts her off at the hips; it might even be a skirt) she wears an old-fashioned stock and collar obsolete by that date, thus availing herself of Historical Drag rather than current male usage, and she has a feminine hairstyle and earrings along with her male monocle. She looks thrilling, even menacing, with her two dogs as



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accessories, but she does not look like a man.

Garber's favorite "crossover" theme, the idea of "crisis" in any such displays, seems wrong in view of the way dress really works. Despite those who frame sumptuary laws, the forbidden is never all that forbidden under the unwritten laws of Western dress, which have been there to question even the very forming of boundaries since the beginning of fashion. To focus on a theory of anxiety, Garber is setting up a stronger tension than is really there. All the flashing signs tend to obscure the landscape and form their own exciting pattern.

Not only has modern women's fashion since 1800 seized on the privilege of ignoring the boundaries of sex, history, species, age, class, and even material category, it has also retained the exclusive right to gaudy embellishment, a habit given up by men once they agreed to be "natural." Now most men can only wear lavish trimmings and makeup on the stage and screen, unless, of course, they are serious transvestites; and one component in the male impulse toward transvestism can't help being the pure desire to benefit from the beauty of brilliant adornment, still comprehensively offered only by feminine dress.

I believe that some of the spectacular trappings that Garber sees as transvestite effects in the clothes of male performers such as Elvis Presley, or the even more flamboyant Liberace and Michael Jackson, do not primarily work as disturbing feminizations or gender confusions, as she reads them. All these performers insist on trousers and masculine hair, including the uniquely male sideburns; and they borrow the details of their gorgeous plumage not from women at all, but from the lost heritage of the glorious masculine past: the huge pearl-laden sleeves, the splendid embroidered coats with diamond buttons, the plumed hats, the lace frills, the sparkling uniforms in vivid colors, and the sweeping, fur-lined velvet capes sported by the powerful males of centuries ago. Liberace and the rock stars recall the fact that display was once a serious function for men—not a questionable feminine wile, not a crude show of wealth, but something truly magnificent, designed to show a link with divinity.

The beauty of serious finery is its capacity to render the wearer dazzling, whatever sexual modulations are at work. It is a primary instrument of attraction. To focus the rays of God's sunlight on the royal person and rightly illuminate his kingship, diamonds and cloth of silver were essential. The descriptions and pictures of Henry VIII and Francis I, both of them unappealingly fat-faced and paunchy monarchs, show how they were made into fabulous, compelling icons by such means. Now rhinestones and sequins will do the trick under a follow-spot. But Liberace, Elvis, and Michael Jackson have invented their images in a world hostile to male display, and have had to support their masculine glitter with the extra erotic charge carried by the flavor of narcissism, now most keenly expressed in personal qualities that need not owe anything to ornamental dress.

In this sexually and morally nervous country, often called puritanical, ordinary men from the beginning of independent American history obviously had a hard time righteously forcing themselves to give up finery, firmly extinguishing the impulse to shine, forever telling themselves that all such effects are trivial, artificial, sinful, characteristically feminine or unspeakably foreign and somehow dishonorable, associated either with the aristocratic tyranny of the Old World or with primitive barbarism. Ordinary Americans still can't allow themselves much of it, though times are changing, partly under the influence of rock performers, and of drag performers, and especially of


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women. Male earrings and remarkable hair are back to stay, now often worn with business suits.

But in comic movies of the 1940s, such as *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* or *Kiss Me Kate*, much joking about homosexuality had to accompany the temporary appearance of the actors in beautiful Renaissance doublets. Heaven forbid they should simply like wearing them. And Garber shows that in anxious America, much joking about homosexuality naturally had to accompany Liberace's gorgeous stage appearances. He was, in fact, gay; but he seems to have rightly wished to dissociate that fact from his enormous glamour. He avowedly loved wearing his magnificent garments, and he looked beautiful in them, rather like Kings Henry and Francis.

But Garber wants Liberace for her "category crisis" theory. What she sees as his transvestism marks the crossover between classical and popular music. She wants Jackson and Elvis as transvestites for the same purpose, to mark the crossover between black and white music. But I think that the independent power of glitter has had a lot to do with the appeal of these performers, a magic working separately from the strong erotic charge of their personalities and their music. Placido Domingo and Luciano Pavarotti, by contrast, can be actual Renaissance princes and Baroque noblemen, dressed in the great sumptuous male trappings of the past that match their great living male voices, with no suggestions of transvestism whatsoever, since the original clothes had none. The old "constructed," non-natural character of the straight male of the past is made wonderfully explicit in operatic dress, as it is in much cinematic dress for serious historical epics. Errol Flynn and Charlton Heston have taken full advantage of it.

In her many discussions of theater as a transvestite arena, Garber seems to have missed a striking 1970s example of the modern actress's sartorial flexibility: Joan Plowright played Portia in Jonathan Miller's production of *The Merchant of Venice*, set in the 1880s with all the men in frock coats (including Laurence Olivier as Shylock, whom Garber does mention in her section on the feminized Jew). Between her early scenes played in corset, curls, and bustle with train, and her courtroom scene played in legal robes and wig, Plowright played the short complicitous scene with Nerissa in perfect drag, wearing a Victorian gentleman's tweed suit with a neat cravat, homburg on clipped head, umbrella and gladstone bag in gloved hand, the image of a young barrister coming to town from his country house. Male costume is not at all necessary to the plot in this scene; Portia is alone with her maid. But it was a stunning way to establish Portia for the audience as finally escaping from the feminine prison of her father's infernal caskets by convincing *herself* that right now she is a creative and resourceful young man, fully able to be a Daniel come to judgment and to save her lover's life. Garber would say that she had been transformed into a creative transvestite to do the job, and that the robe and wig of her triumphant scene were still too feminized to make the point.

On the modern realistic stage only women still seem to be such perfectly changeable presences, able to shift sexes as most male actors do not. The perfect youth or boy may indeed be played by a woman, as in the case of Peter Pan—Garber has a long essay on why; and we are now convinced that the complete actress may certainly play Prospero or Lear as well as Ophelia or Cordelia, just as Sarah Bernhardt played Hamlet as well as Lady Macbeth. Women can be boys or sprites or heroes at will; but despite the great rage for drag performers of all sorts these days, we still do not hear of a serious production of Ibsen, Shaw, or Shakespeare with Dustin Hoffman playing Hedda Gabler, Candida, or Cleopatra.

With the modern feminization of all dress-ups, everything obviously became very complicated, especially on the stage. Garber doesn't point out, for example, that the transvestite women in traditional "breeches" parts are usually wearing male garb from the eighteenth century and before, most of which now registers much more strongly as fancy-historical than as masculine. In fact, on modern female performers, it seems more feminine than not, since women's clothing has been borrowing so much historical male dress for so long. The Shakespearean females, all originally boys, often play boys; but the women who play them now in doublet and hose look entirely female throughout. There is nothing transvestite about the effect, and nothing very disturbing or threatening to boundaries. Even the woman playing Peter Pan always wears a sort of "Ye Olde" Robin Hood outfit, not real boys' clothes.

The idea that an artificial femininity is created by assuming artificial elements of dress is very current, masking the fact that all adult humanity is created that way. Men and women join the fallen and imperfect human race by putting on awkward, ridiculous, and demanding clothes, just as Adam and Eve did; and of course, our first parents' garments were exactly alike. When it comes to sexual awareness, we have all really been transvested from the start. Plainly male and female dress have the same function, to create a fictional body that is the right image of a state of mind, and that perpetually tells its story to its owner, even when only God is present. Getting dressed is something done to satisfy an inward desire to be rightly *completed* by clothes. It is certainly pertinent to the issue of

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The Tongue of High Coy:

*Do you Desire to Purchase a Beverage?*
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praise exaltation,

never calling a route salesman a milkman,
nor an officer of the law a cop, nor
a senior citizen old, nor a starving
freezing bagwoman

poor. When we can't alter ills that upset us,
we will change their names to prevent compassion
from disturbing our ungulate composure:
words to deny worlds.

Vocabulary deletes original
sin; cavalry of the lie reach Calvary
just in time, to bugle Christ down from the cross.
But: no nails, no Christ.

**DONALD HALL**



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transvestism, since people are fully aware that clothes create selves, rather than sitting on top of them.

A person choosing to wear the clothes of the other sex right away suggests a person for whom sexuality is of the first importance, someone who feels complete (at least on this or that occasion) in clothes that draw constant attention to sex in general, and all its possibilities, not just to personal attractiveness. And this alarms many, since sex is alarming. Garber describes the fear, expressed by certain seventeenth-century Puritans, that allowing boys to dress up as women for the stage would arouse their sexual feelings and even perniciously turn them into girls, perhaps make them feel feminine desires of other kinds. The same kind of idea persists in ordinary modern life, although the understanding that the way we dress creates us now goes well beyond sex. The whole subject is alarming to people who think that it is right and good to deny, or at least to despise, the creative power of clothes.

Clothes seek their own ways to contradict what they mainly purport to mean, even while illuminating and elaborating that meaning. The body blends with the other components, often lending its separate parts to a variety of conflicting visual transformations. Clothes can suggest the felon in the churchgoer, or the other way around. They often suggest that the truly completed body has a basic shape quite different from the unfinished naked form. All of these effects are essentially erotic, since the body is their first element, even if sexuality is not their theme.

In this realm, "the place of desire," as Garber puts it, has always been everywhere. The figure of the transvestite does not need to return; it never really left. Clothes have consistently shown how deeply a sense of sexual interchangeability and fluidity is ingrained in our civilization, just like the sense of all other permutations. The tensions evoked by dress are serious rather than urgent, the product of long accretions rather than strategic deployments of conflicting force. In Garber's compendium of theories and stories of transvestism, I don't find the one from Ovid about Zeus dressing in the body of Diana, the better to seduce her nymph Callisto, nor any other tales from that ancient master of love and metamorphosis. And no mention of Tiresias, our old prophet of these imponderables, whose sagacity I sorely miss in these pages. •


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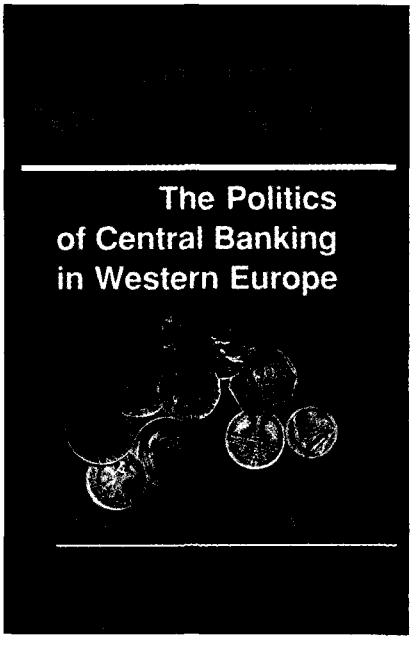


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# *Truth and Consequences*

**BY STANISLAW BARANCZAK**

## A Feast in the Garden by George Konrad translated by Imre Goldstein

**(Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 394 pp., $23.95)**

"But according to a French historian, Vera was not gassed, because there never were any gas chambers."

A great deal could be said about that single sentence. It forms the final paragraph of the powerful centerpiece of George Konrad's book ("In Which David Kobra"—the author's alter ego—"Recalls a Few Episodes of the War's Last Year"). Cut the sentence from the page and show it to an intelligent reader (if there are still such things as readers) in a hundred years, and that reader, like a paleontologist examining a single tailbone left from a mammoth and winding up with a detailed anatomical sketch of the whole beast, may be able to deduce from these few words alone what kind of person the author was, from what part of the world he or she hailed, and in what epoch he or she lived. Nor is that all: the reader may even be able to guess the purpose of the entire book, and know the aesthetic principles the author had chosen for that purpose.

It is not the sort of sentence, in other words, that can be hurt by being taken out of context, because it carries its context in itself—in its direct meaning and in its indirect strain of sarcasm. It could be pronounced in such a forked-tongued way only by someone who has lost someone dear to him in the Holocaust, for whom the real-life existence of the Holocaust, with all its instrumentalization of mass murder, is a fact, a fact evidenced also by millions of similar losses, all of which happened within the narrator's living memory and within his or her nation's orbit of experience (which, in turn, means that he has lived through the middle part of this century, probably in Central Europe). The efforts of those who are trying to deny this fact must seem to such an individual so ludicrous as to be unworthy of so much as a polemic. Its substitute, a sarcastic shrug, is produced by the use of the word "historian." These are our times, the sentence seems to be saying, these are the times that we have had to live in: 6 million people gassed, and their hair, their eyeglasses, and the lampshades made of their skin still to be seen in campsite museums—and someone who says that this mountain of corpses was never heaped up calls himself a historian.

The sarcasm is even more bitter since this particular sentence's narrator (who is, at this point in Konrad's novel, the author's mouthpiece, if not his mirror image) has lost more than one childhood companion, "awkward little Vera," "a proper little girl, given easily to crying." "Out of 200 of my schoolmates, only seven of us survived," he remarks brusquely elsewhere. Being Jewish in Hungary in the early 1940s meant being quite familiar with mass murder, as it snatched its victims all around you and brought you a constant premonition of your own death. It did so even if you were 11 years old:

> In the winter of 1944-45 I thought of death almost the way one thinks of firewood: there was nothing special about it. It was a thing beyond my control, and there was no point in fearing it, for it had as much probability, no more, no less, as drawing a bad card and losing.

"I owe my life to a series of fortunate coincidences," says Konrad. Behind this statement we find no empty display of existential paradoxes, only another set of hard, specific, demonstrable facts, ones well rooted in the concrete space of Hungary during the concrete historical period from World War II to the Budapest uprising of 1956 to the years of the decline of communism. If not for one such fact—the fact that his parents' good luck was to have been arrested by the Gestapo before the mass deportations of the Hungarian Jews to Auschwitz started—he and his family would have perished in gas chambers as almost every childhood friend did. Instead his parents were sent to Austria, and from there they returned home after the war; and he and his sister almost miraculously survived the war in Budapest.

Tell the Holocaust survivor that he was wrong to fear a gas chamber because such contraptions never existed, and you will see what sarcasm looks like. Not that Konrad has made this entire book into an extended sarcastic grimace, or that he wrote it to repudiate some neo-Nazi's ravings. This fourth major work of Hungary's leading novelist (following *The Case Worker* in 1974, *The City Builder* in 1977, and *The Loser* in 1982) is his response to something more essential: the crucial paradox of our time, the paradox centered precisely around the notion of "fact." Czeslaw Milosz once described the same paradox as mankind's division into "those who know but do not speak" and "those who speak but do not know."

Before our century, there was probably no epoch in human history in which such colossal masses of people were exposed to such an avalanche of utterly shattering facts. Each of those facts was another piece of evidence to support a general indictment of humanity, and each of them alone would have been enough to turn upside down the entire set of traditional presuppositions about the constitution of human nature. The paradox is this: that there was no other epoch in human history in which an analogous avalanche of hard, provable, indelibly remembered, painstakingly recorded facts could be reported *and* no other epoch in which it would have been so easy to conceal, to deny, to distort, to justify falsely, or to pass over these same facts in silence. The success of evil in our century has been matched, every step of the way, by the success of deceit. For each can of Zyklon-B, another propaganda bullhorn; for each concentration camp, another hate-mongering newspaper; for each wave of mass destruction, another generation of "historians" denying its having occurred at all.

Except perhaps for the times of the Tatar invasions or the Black Plague, the decades stretching from Lenin and Hitler until now have been unprecedented in the ease with which you—an innocent victim whose only "guilt" was to be a Jew or Gypsy, or to possess a small plot of land, or to have an undesired social origin, educational background, religion, or skin color, or just to be standing at the wrong place at the wrong time—could be killed. But neither was there an earlier epoch in which it would have been so easy for your killer to lie about your death. In Genghis Khan's days—an era dripping with blood, sure, but charmingly innocent in the matter of deceit—those who slit throats simply did it, without ever bothering to distort or to justify what they did. The twentieth



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century, on the other hand, has designed and built colossal domes of ideologies and powerhouses of propaganda precisely for the purpose of convincing the world that there *is* such a thing as (to use the infamous phrase of the young Auden that the older Auden disowned) "the necessary murder." Or, better, convincing the world that it never happened. Or, better still, convincing you personally that even if it happened, you need not care.

Here is where literature comes in. And its entrance complicates things considerably. For as long as we deal with facts in their empirical reality, we can do one of two things about them. We can choose not to speak of them at all. Or, if we choose to speak of them, we can choose at least to try to speak the truth and nothing but the truth, or conversely choose to give ourselves free rein in lying. (I know that I skirt the huge philosophical question of what is a "fact." Let us agree, for the purpose of this argument, that we are interested in that small group of propositions about the events of the world that are essentially undeniable, such as physical pain or death—undeniable, that is, unless you are a consistent solipsist for whom even your own toothache or your own mother's funeral are also just figments of your own imagination.)

Now, literature complicates this nice black-and-white division of anything we can say about the world into the True and the False because it adds a third option: the Fictitious. To be sure, there is no shortage of poor souls in literary studies nowadays whose idea of Marxism or feminism requires them to take literary characters for real-life persons, to upbraid all Rastignacs for their capitalist ways or all Emma Bovarys for their excessive submissiveness. But readers who still prefer Balzac to Terry Eagleton will agree that the very notion of literature is founded on the possibility of a quasi-assertive statement. A sentence in a novel that says, "Major Roberts sported long sideburns," has the delusive appearance of an assertion whose truth or untruth can be checked against facts. The trouble is, there may be no fact, no real Major Roberts, against which to check anything; and even if there happened to be a real Major Roberts, the question of the size and the very existence of his real-life sideburns is moot. The novelist's specific brand of "truth" simply cannot be measured in such categories.

A statement made by a novel's narrator strikes us as well-aimed not because it accurately reflects some detail of real life


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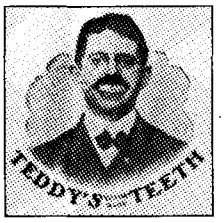


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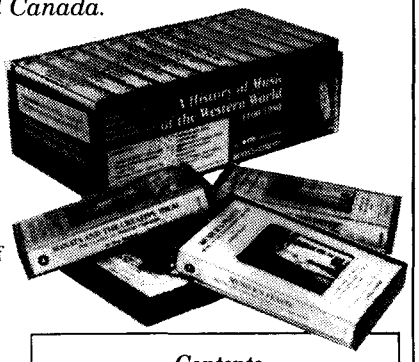

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(though that may well be one of its ancillary charms), but because it is effective and functional within the novel's world. We might search the archives and discover that throughout the entire nineteenth century there was no case in the city of Petersburg of a young man having murdered an old female owner of a pawnshop with an ax. So what? Such an event is needed for *Crime and Punishment* not to illustrate statistical data but to make the novel's plot and meaning move on and interest the reader.

So it was with the novel's idea of fiction for a long time, up to and including its modernist transformations in the first half of our century. The revolutionary changes that affected the genre in those years had to do with the novel's narrative structure and, by extension, with its hierarchy of values, but the basic status of the novel as fiction is the same in Joyce and Woolf as it was in Fielding and Scott. The next step was made later, and it was precipitated precisely by the avalanche of facts defying intellectual comprehension and literary treatment that the Second World War brought about. It was at about the time when George Konrad was experiencing life as an 11-year-old wearing a yellow Star of David in the streets of Budapest that novelists began to rethink the very relation between "fact" and "fiction."

One result of that reconsideration was a conviction that, as we read it now among numerous other programmatic statements in Konrad's book, sounds rather banal: "The novel is a medium rather than a genre. You put into it whatever you wish; there are no regulations, only that it should not be boring." This concept of the novel as a bottomless bag, into which the author packs, with no clear principle of selection, things relevant and random, stylized and spontaneous, fictitious and factual, is itself already old hat. Not terribly new, either, is Konrad's next step toward a clarification of his literary credo: his admission that, stranded between these extremes, he feels a much stronger pull toward the randomness and the spontaneity of the bare fact:

> I am bored with literature. It is with aversion that I read Flaubert's letters about the sanctity of art. I am tired of invented characters and invented plots. Usually I do not manage to read a novel to the end. Isn't it strange that novelists seldom read novels?

Strange? Hardly. Not where Konrad comes from, and not in the 1990s, in any case. It is precisely in Eastern and Central Europe after 1945 that truckloads of works have been written whose structure and generic affiliation resulted from a profound and perfectly warranted doubt about the validity of fiction as such.

In such cases, the writer's line of reasoning, implicit or explicit, usually goes something like this:

1. At this historic time, in this part of the world, I am surrounded by a seething world of facts, each of which is infinitely more dramatic, profound, unexpected, unique, terrifying, tragic, grotesque, funny, fascinating than anything I could invent. (In Konrad's version: "Today I know that my friends are more interesting than the characters in my novels. My friends have created themselves with a finer ingenuity, and through the struggle of a lifetime.")

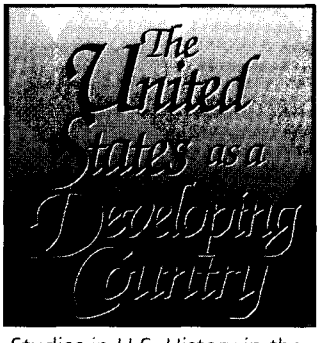
2. Besides, even as we novelists write something that has the appearance of a work of fiction, we actually model our plots, our descriptions, and our characters on real-life events, real-life objects, or real-life people anyway, not excluding (indeed, giving priority to) our real-life selves. (Konrad: "One author pretends to be the chronicler of actual events, another publishes a found manuscript, and the third merely passes on to us what he heard from a stranger, a fellow passenger on a train.... In every one of my novels I have woven adventures around me.")

3. So why, then, the pretense? (Konrad: "Why would you want to pretend to be somebody else?") Why should I delude myself and my readers into thinking that I am sticking to the old novelists' ways and spinning an invented tale, when, first, a simple representation of this or another fact or individual life has incomparably more power than any imagined episode or life story, and second, when the attitude of the readers has shifted in the same way as the attitude of the writers—when they, too, are "bored with literature" and prefer fact to fiction?

As I have said, a whole school of writing has emerged over the postwar period in Eastern and Central European literatures that makes this line of argument the chief reason for its own existence. Konrad's novel—which opens rather discouragingly with thirty pages of all talk and no action, as if to tease the reader into exclaiming, All right, Konrad, you've said you can put whatever you wish into this book, but you've also said it shouldn't be boring!—can be taken, at first glance, for a typical specimen of this kind of writing. The author's decision to stop "pretending to be somebody else," to compose the book of clearly non-fictional (more specifically, autobiographical) sections, seems to have made *A Feast in the Garden* yet another memoir in lieu of a novel, yet another display of memory rather than imagination and narrative ability. In those respects, Konrad indeed does sound not very much different from, say, Ludvik Vaculik or Tadeusz Konwicki.

Still, there are some differences, and their combined impact makes Konrad's approach an original literary position, and his book a major work. If the negative part of his program—the rejection of literature as pretense—is nowhere near original, the same cannot be said about the positive part. Here Konrad proves much more subtle and reaches much deeper. A lesser writer would have been sure of success had he simply replaced the pretense of literature with the ingenuity of fact, and the novelistic "pretending to be somebody else" with the factographic (autobiographic, diaristic, confessional, you name it) "being myself." Konrad, on the contrary, realizes unfailingly that once you write, even in the most direct and sincere fashion, staying as far as you can from invention and confabulation, your real-life self becomes unavoidably your literary self. The magnitude of literature's presence in such a self-portrayal may differ considerably, but literature is always there.

Why? Because even the purest inge-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nuity of fact can be made more effective by devices that belong to the arsenal of pretense. Consider the following, which is as pure an example of directly related fact as you can find in a book. Konrad describes the moment his father was arrested and led away by the Gestapo:

> On that day, May 15, everything was as usual. Horse droppings lay drying in three-ball clumps on the warm pavement, and the light was yellow on the thick steeple of the Protestant church and on the rows of acacia that lined the indifferent street. Father looked neither to the right nor to the left. Nobody greeted him. Looking at the faces of your acquaintances while being led by armed guards can by edifying. Father knew everyone he saw in the street, but he had nothing to say to them; he walked as if in a scene being filmed. The scene was not upsetting, perhaps not even sad; only unusual. The faces at first showed puzzlement, then the features were rearranged: Ah, yes, this is what's happening now; they're taking away the Jews.

This is great writing: no other judgment is possible. In the teaching of Expository Writing it could be held up as a model of "How to Tell What Happened in the Most Informatively Effective Way." But couldn't it be just as useful to the teaching of Creative Writing, as a splendid example of "How to Tell What Happened in the Most Aesthetically Pleasing Way"? And isn't the passage's informative success, its ability to tell so much in just a few sentences, a direct consequence of formal qualities that have been achieved by means of a number of stylistic and narrative tricks taken from literature's store?

What, in other words, is responsible for the brilliance of this description? The power of bare fact, or discreet literary makeup—a touch of powder here, a trace of henna there—put on the fact's found face? Imagine the loss the paragraph would suffer if, for instance, such a priceless detail as the neatly arranged horse droppings were skipped. And what is that particular detail, fact or art? It might well have been part of the real-life scene that the 11-year-old Konrad once saw. But, fact or no fact, isn't the decision to include the image of the droppings on the pavement in the account of your father's arrest a choice that an artist would make?

What I am trying to suggest goes very much against the grain of today's customary way of reading Eastern and Central European fiction. The critics' usual approach is to let themselves be swept off their feet (or not) by the sheer power of the facts related—so swept off their feet that they neglect to put their fingers on what makes such an impact of the facts possible at all: on literature's old and new ways of telling and showing why, how, and to what end the facts were happening. Wasn't Nietzsche right when he said that "facts are stupid"? If we let ourselves be duped into believing that the definition of a good contemporary novel is "a work of, actually, non-fiction, which nevertheless is better than any work of fiction because it brings up more such facts which no fiction writer could invent," then, boy, are we on the wrong track. George Konrad, too, declares that he is "bored with literature." But let us not be fooled. This is a great writer's ploy, a sly provocation from a writer who knows his craft. Finally Konrad wants us to believe in the "boredom with literature" only so as to rekindle in us, by the reading of his book, our old fascination with what literature is still capable of doing.

STANISLAW BARANCZAK is the author most recently of *Breathing Under Water and Other East European Essays* (Harvard University Press).


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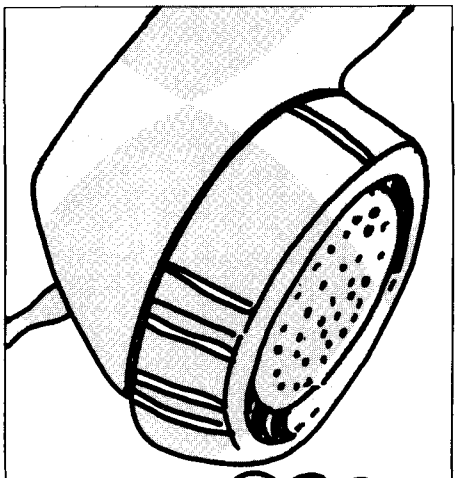

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# *The Revision Thing*

**By Robert S. Leiken**

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## Commandos: The CIA and Nicaragua's Contra Rebels by Sam Dillon

**(Holt, 393 pp., $27.50)**

On my first visit to the New Nicaragua, I tasted a cup of bitterness at a hacienda in Matagalpa. It was the summer of 1981, only two years after the Sandinistas' triumph over the tyrant Somoza. My assurance faltered when the coffee pickers blamed their evident misery on the government I wanted to admire: "We can't even offer you sugar for your coffee or a soft drink. '*No hay.*'" They had been told that the green land was theirs. For the first time the scandalous refrain, "We were better off under Somoza," dazed my ears.

Not far from the hacienda, a Matagalpan farmer named Luis Fley was acting on his disillusion. A former Sandinista commando and revolutionary official, Fley was becoming a "contra." He had made contact with a group of peasants known by the acronym MILPAS (Anti-Somocista Patriotic Militias). Sam Dillon of *The Miami Herald* describes how Fley and his neighbors joined them in one of the first "spontaneous internal anti-Sandinista uprisings." At the time I was assured that these were not spontaneous peasant uprisings, but premeditated incursions by revanchist members of Somoza's National Guard. Real peasants, like my disgruntled coffee farmers, could only revile the contras.

When Nicaragua stood in the glare of the media and in the force field of the cold war, the coverage of it was governed by our own left/right feud. Like most journalists, Dillon was a critic of the Reagan policy and the contras. One of the few who sympathized was Glenn Garvin of *The Washington Times*. Though each of them returned from their explorations with their ideological presuppositions intact, their books reach some arrestingly similar conclusions: that the contras were largely peasant volunteers who evolved into a genuine guerrilla army, enjoyed the indisputable support of the peasantry, and (as the liberal Dillon puts it) forced the Sandinistas to "sue for peace."

Something like a revolution of reputations has taken place since the Sandinistas' defeat in the election of 1990. Legalized looting on a Brobdingnagian scale swelled the outgoing Sandinistas' bank accounts, but it reduced their stature to the level of their infamous predecessor. "The Sandinistas came into office proclaiming 'property is theft,'" cracked the opposition newspaper *La Prensa*, "and left proclaiming 'theft is property.'" Meanwhile the contras are enjoying something of a re-evaluation in surprising American corners. "The Sandinistas were not more popular than the contras as was widely imagined," Paul Berman of *The Village Voice* has realized, "they were merely more frightening." In the liberal *New York Review of Books* under the title "The Betrayal of the Contras," Michael Massing, another critic, has conceded that the Sandinistas' "own heavy-handed policies, rather than any outside incitement, gave rise to the contras." Human rights groups that for years piously reported that Sandinista abuses were the exception and contra abuses the rule have now taken notice of the dozens of clandestine cemeteries discovered at the site of reported contra massacres. The graves contain the remains of peasants tortured and beheaded by Sandinistas.

But the most unexpected revisions have come from the Sandinistas themselves. The election returns showed that the contras were anything but the onus for the opposition that the American press had supposed: the opposition chalked up its most lopsided margins precisely where the rebels reportedly had been terrorizing the local peasantry. (In Matagalpa the Sandinistas lost by nearly two-to-one; in the central provinces of Chontales and Boaco the margin was closer to three-to-one.) After the elections, a top Sandinista comandante pub-



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licly acknowledged that the contras were "a campesino movement with its own leadership," and rival Sandinista factions started blaming each other for their unpopularity in the countryside. And last year Alejandro Bendaña, once Daniel Ortega's spokesperson, argued in an essay that the contras were the product of "the policies, limitations, and errors of Sandinismo."

With these revisions and self-criticisms, the cloud of pious lies and fake anti-imperialist rhetoric that covered the mayhem in the Nicaraguan countryside has begun to lift. Of course, the clouds issued also from our own newspapers and televisions, where the Sandinistas figured, by and large, as the campesinos' friend and guide and the contras as their scourge, as a proxy army of cross-border raiders created by the CIA out of mercenary remnants of Somoza's National Guard, terrorizing a rural population for the first time enjoying freedom and development, forcing the regime to close ranks against superpower intervention.

It was always difficult with this system of stereotypes to explain how the contras became, as Dillon mentions, "the largest guerrilla force in Latin America since the Mexican revolution." Officials of the United Nations and the Organization of American States supervising the contra demobilization were stunned at their numbers: 28,000 fighters, plus families. And the Sandinista Bendaña, who made his career on American television affirming the opposite, acknowledges that "the integration of thousands of peasants into the counterrevolutionary army" was not the work of the CIA but "of Sandinismo."

Bendaña, who studied at Harvard and whose unaccented defense of his government became a staple of the evening news, verifies that Sandinista rural authorities labored under the delusion that "in the countryside, as well as in the rest of the nation, two great antagonistic social forces were taking shape." Through proper "political work" the rural "working class" promptly "would be brought to participate in the great confrontation between proletarians and bourgeoisie." The Sandinista missionaries to their own countryside, in short, had learned about Nicaragua from the safe distance of a dogmatic Marxism. But, as Dillon makes clear, Fley's Matagalpa, like most of the Nicaraguan countryside, was studded with small proprietors who traditionally shared planting, plowing, and harvesting. And when "class warfare broke out," it was the peasantry as a whole that rose up against the new elites from the city.

Fley watched his Sandinista superior "fast becoming a petty tyrant in his dealings with coffee farmers" as he "swaggered through every minute of the day in olive drabs, side arm strapped to his hips," cheating the peasants blind. Peasants who dared to complain at one of the renowned Sandinista "open meetings" were labeled "bourgeois counterrevolutionaries." "Later several of the most vocal peasants were arrested. Others saw their farms confiscated, then given to Sandinista party people." Before a year of revolutionary power had elapsed, "many peasant farmers were so fed up with government policies, they were already looking back with nostalgia to a romanticized time before the revolution."

These new accounts furnish the general outline of what now must be seen as a large and complex phenomenon. Not long after their initial attack, contra units were spending from six months to two years deep inside Nicaragua, fed and sheltered by the peasants and provided with exact information on Sandinista troop movements. "The contras," Bendaña tells us, "grew well beyond the expectations of the North Americans themselves," becoming "a parallel social and military power in the Nicaraguan countryside." As fresh recruits streamed in, Garvin describes how contra commando units would "break in two, like an amoeba, and the new unit would go still deeper inside in Nicaragua." By the time of the first American cutoff of aid in 1984, "the war raged throughout the countryside," and the Sandinistas were on the defensive. Roger Miranda, a former top official in the Sandinista Defense Ministry, states in a forthcoming memoir that the contras, but for poor leadership and the sudden lack of funding, "might have moved ahead to a military victory in 1984 when the [Sandinista army] did not yet have the military units it needed to stand up to a rapidly expanding peasant insurgency."

In the year following the suspension of aid, the contras survived not because of Oliver North, but, as Dillon shows, because they rapidly "forged a social base with peasant farmers through a vast strip of farm country extending from the Honduran border south through nine provinces all the way to Costa Rica." When American military aid was resumed in 1986, CIA and Pentagon training and equipment enabled the contras to coordinate their hitherto local and tactical operations into a major strategic offensive. "Eight months into the rebel offensive," Dillon writes, "Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega sued for peace, committing his revolutionary government to democratic rule and leading it into direct peace talks with the contras." "The Sandinistas negotiated," Garvin concludes,


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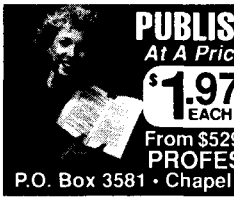
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because "the roof was falling in."

Why, then, was the media stereotype so inaccurate? Well, for one thing, if this was a peasant army, who were those contra officials with their expensive clothes and expansive bellies in the swank hotels of Miami and Tegucigalpa? As one dissident contra complained, "It was as if the contra leadership had been designed to their critics' specifications." Bendaña agrees with Garvin and Dillon that the first contras, the MILPAS, were in fact Sandinista peasants; but the early contra ranks contained none of the stylish ex-student activists who founded the Sandinistas and most modern revolutionary organizations. The task of establishing the contras' organization and their foreign alliances fell to a former National Guard colonel named Enrique Bermudez.

Bermudez brought with him a handful of National Guard cronies who monopolized the top posts. His clique sold American supplies on the Honduran black market, while peasant guerrillas, awaiting supply drops that never came, were decimated by Soviet-made helicopters. Eventually the tensions between Bermudez's staff and the MILPAS exploded into internal rebellion: beset by a "strategic command" ignorant of guerrilla warfare and a "political directorate" incapable even of public relations, the contras eventually succeeded because the peasants sustained them. By the end of the internecine struggle, former MILPAS dominated the command structure, but by then it was too late to save the contras' reputation.

The contras embodied the vices and the virtues of the actual place, not the ones that fervent foreigners imagined. Most of Nicaragua's leaders, whether military or civilian, Sandinista or anti-Sandinista, were, and remain, moral monsters—entirely capable of extolling their countrymen's sacrifices even as they fleece them. The Sandinistas' capacity to debauch nobility was every bit the equal of the contras'. Still, the partisan proclivities and post-Vietnam susceptibilities of American journalists made supple material for the Sandinistas' shrewd recasting of themselves as an ineffable compound of New Leftism, primitive Christianity, Third World nationalism, European semi-socialism, and development economics.

Shirley Christian once wrote that her journalist colleagues viewed the Sandinistas "through a romantic haze." Two years before the revolution, what had been a fairly dogmatic Leninist sect recruited a talking revolutionary poster named Eden Pastora. The Sandinistas installed the bearded charmer, who proclaimed himself a social democrat and called himself "Commander Zero," as their chief spokesperson and charismatic, though he had zero influence in their high command. Pastora and company beguiled the foreign press and roused the Nicaraguans to stand up to the tyrant Somoza. But after the dust settled the journalists were far slower than the Nicaraguans to discover that the dragon slayers themselves had become dragons.

The American press eagerly took up the challenge to prove that the contras were not Reagan's "moral equivalent of the Founding Fathers." Thus it was the "unstated ambition" of Stephen Kinzer, *The New York Times*'s placid Managua bureau chief, "to expose the truth that the contras were not indigenous rebels, but cross-border raiders under foreign protection." In much of the Nicaraguan reporting "the truth" was known before the facts. Urges to "expose" were aroused almost exclusively by Reagan, rarely by the Sandinistas.

For a time Nicaragua's battlefield became the main theater of our post-Vietnam Kulturkampf. Our generation was confident that in Indochina it had discovered the truth about revolution and oppression, small nations and insurgent peasants. The Southeast Asian paradigm received a Central American habitation and a name when the Nicaragua-bound reporter did his background reading, consulted "area specialists" and "policy analysts," and debriefed his predecessor, which is to say immersed himself in our stereotypes of the region. The war of words covered the place like a fog.

*Cumplo pero no obedesco,* I comply but I do not obey: thus have the Nicaraguans traditionally satisfied the expectations and the demands of foreigners. Professing respect for human rights while persecuting their subjects, the Sandinistas fashioned that tradition into a political science. Their subjects employed a less grotesque version of those evasive tactics to cope with the Sandinistas themselves, politely telling apparatchik, pollster, or journalist what he wished to hear. Just before the 1990 elections, for example, an ABC/*Washington Post* survey "concluded" that "72 percent of [Nicaraguans] are angry the U.S. has supported the contras." Such surveys were conducted and reported as if candor could be expected in a place where for years even rumored support for the contras had meant detention or disappearance.

And the press corps in Nicaragua was, of course, only a branch of the American media, subject to the pressures and the prejudices of the home office. The "free market" enforced uniformity, penalizing the correspondent who tarried in the countryside and missed the Sandinistas' latest denial of Washington's latest charge or vice versa. And when the journalist got to spend time outside Managua, he could get entangled in "mythomania," the term that Nicaraguan savants use to describe their cultural tendency to merge fact and fancy. The empirically-minded American reporter, in search of facts to support his "truth," found himself in "the land of the poets." The tall tale is especially relished along Nicaragua's vast internal frontier, the contras' stamping grounds, steeped in custom and superstition, where the oral outweighs the written.

Then there was Edgar Chamorro, a deliberate mythomaniac and a more extravagant specimen of Nicaraguans' ability to fashion their discourse to others' specifications. As a contra press agent, the mild-mannered Chamorro composed some of the more febrile exaggerations of the Soviet and Cuban presence in Nicaragua. After his highly publicized defection from the contras, his fancy found a readier audience. (His most influential "confession" was published in these pages in 1985 and is cited repeatedly, along with other Chamorro tall tales, in Dillon's end notes.) After the Sandinistas' electoral defeat, Garvin found Chamorro in Miami "sad and lost," abandoned by his American patrons. Responding to Garvin's reproach that he had "twisted the truth," Chamorro confessed wretchedly: "I was all alone when I left the contras, and the left helped me out."

Garvin also demolishes whatever remained of the legend of another chameleon, the infinitely captivating and somewhat sleazy and utterly megalomaniacal Commander Zero. (Pastora, who set up his own contra group to rival Bermudez, is strangely absent from Dillon's account—perhaps because the CIA's strong support for this ex-Sandinista conflicts with Dillon's thesis that the CIA always backed Bermudez.) But the skepticism that Garvin trains on Chamorro and on Pastora deserts him in the presence of Bermudez, his own preferred Nicaraguan, who encouraged susceptible Americans to fancy that he was George Washington's "moral equivalent" even as his inner circle dined and whored elegantly on peasant relief funds. Garvin ignores the many mutually corroborating accounts of the abuses of the Bermudez high command (thoroughly vetted by Dillon).

Should the United States have supported the contra cause? After the San-

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dinistas' sham elections of 1984 and their rebuff of all attempts to modify their totalitarian course, I came to believe that the answer was yes, but .... The "but" came to be known as contra reform. The American right, uncritically supporting the "freedom fighters," winked at defects of their leaders; but the left, trying to terminate them, slighted the peasant fighters and the justice of their cause. So when a number of contra reformers brought their ideas to Washington, a number of centrist Republicans and Democrats—I was one of them—found them persuasive.

On the effort to reform the contra leadership—to stop the corruption and the human rights violations, and to modernize the contras' organization, diplomacy, and public discourse—Dillon and Garvin diverge along the usual ideological lines. Their books epitomize the old partisanship almost as much as they expose it. The sole American official who supported the remarkable human rights work of Marta Patricia Baltodano was the much-maligned Elliott Abrams, which is why Garvin denounces contra reform as "State Department meddling." For Dillon, the endeavor was hopelessly quixotic. He organizes his narrative around Fley's seemingly lonely effort to identify and punish contra human rights violators. But contra reform was a broad undertaking by many Nicaraguans, including field commanders and grunts, political reformers and human rights activists. One whom Dillon does portray is Baltodano, the 28-year-old human rights lawyer, who trudged into the contras' mountain camps and mustered Fley and other reform-minded contras, defying the threats and the wrath of Bermudez's clique, the CIA station chief, and the American ambassador in Honduras.

Fley and other reformist contra commanders refused to excuse the crimes uncovered by Baltodano's Nicaraguan Association for Human Rights (ANPDH) by arguing, as Garvin does, the exigencies of guerrilla warfare. On the other hand, Dillon never inquires whether contra abuses were more or less heinous and widespread than those of the Sandinistas or, say, of the Afghan *mujahedin*. The latter were, by all accounts, far more vicious than the contras, yet their offenses received little press treatment, in part because, unlike the contras, they enjoyed the support of a bipartisan consensus.

The gravest failure of American reporting in Nicaragua was not the 1990 elections, but the clandestine cemeteries. Baltodano's ANPDH reported that after the Sandinistas fell, their office filled with "people seeking the whereabouts of their loved ones or merely hoping to give them a Christian burial":

> The wave of complaints registered gives an idea of the terror that reigned in our campesino regions. The common graves remained there for years without the families of the victims daring to present the mildest claim before any national or international body.

Even today most of those claims remain uninvestigated thanks to the continuing Sandinista control of the army and police and what ANPDH calls the "indifference" of the new government, which quickly forgot that it came to power via a massive rural vote. ANPDH estimates those missing from Sandinista Nicaragua to be approximately 1,000—a number proportionately equivalent to those "disappeared" in Argentina's infamous "dirty war."

The covert killing continues. A dozen top contra commanders, including Bermudez and his main MILPAS rivals, have been dispatched by Sandinista death squads, after having been persuaded to count on a "reconciliation" policed by their adversaries; and so have more than 100 of their followers. The indifference of the present Nicaraguan government is matched by that of the present American government. Nicaragua quietly reverts to a less dramatic despotism while the United States, as in the past, averts its gaze.

ROBERT S. LEIKEN is writing a book on the American debate about the Cuban and Nicaraguan revolutions.

**TRB** *continued from page 8*

ranks 47th.

A "Factsheet [sic]: Clinton Fiscal Policy" put out by the Bush-Quayle Committee augments the "128 tax increases" canard with the assertion that "taxes are $397.1 million higher on an annual basis than when Clinton took office." This figure, of course, reflects inflation and real growth as well as any genuine tax increases. By the same moronic calculus, federal taxes are $476.4 *billion* higher than when Ronald Reagan and George Bush took office—almost double.

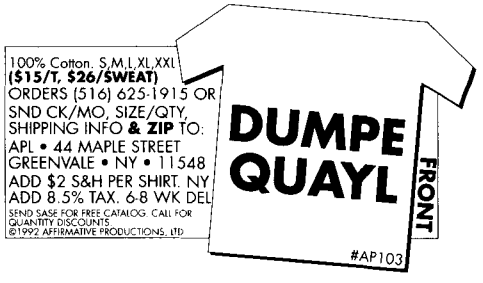
In fact, the absurdity of this whole count-the-taxes exercise is illustrated by applying it to George Bush's tenure as president. Just one tax increase? Forget it. The notorious 1990 tax increase was in fact at least 73 separate increases. And Bush signed tax bills in 1989 and 1991 as well, each one with multiple provisions. Who can forget his memorable decision in 1989 to "Limit non-recognition treatment when securities are received in certain Section 351 transactions"? That one was a $1.4 billion tax increase over five years.

There have been dozens of federal excise tax increases during Bush's reign. For example, in 1990 he imposed a two-stage tax increase (to take place in 1991 and 1993) on both small and large cigars—two distinct categories in the statute. According to the Bush-Quayle rules, that counts as four separate tax increases.

Overall, by my count using his rules, Bush has raised taxes 133 times—more often in just four years than Clinton did in eleven. And that doesn't even include increased fees for government services such as campgrounds in National Parks. Nor does it include criminal fines. The real total of Bush tax increases, as defined by the Bush rules, would be hundreds more.

Every day the Bush-Quayle machine puts out stuff like this malarkey about "128 tax increases," and every day Republican sound-bite artists fan out to spread the word—often word-for-word from the press release. The Clinton-Gore machine is certainly no less efficient, but I believe it is less dishonest. If anyone has an example of a similar raw deception propagated by the Democratic campaign, I would like to hear of it. Meanwhile, returning to the would-be Bush theme of "trust," I think I prefer Reagan's old mantra about negotiating arms control with the Soviets: "Trust, but verify."

**MICHAEL KINSLEY**

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# NEW YORK DIARIST

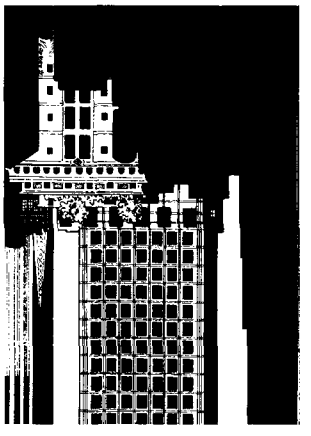
## On that town

A FEW MONTHS AGO THE SHAW FESTival in Canada asked me to write a program note for its forthcoming revival of the American musical *On the Town.* (They do a few things besides Shaw every year, including one musical.) They sent me a copy of the script to refresh myself. I had seen the show when it opened in New York in December 1944 and had seen the subsequent film, but reading the script in 1992 surprised me. There isn't a word in it about the war. Nothing was more on American minds in 1944 than World War II. True, the trio of leading men in the show are sailors, but the gobs-ashore idea had often been used in peacetime plays and films. In a way, the presence of sailors only makes things more curious—none of them seems to have been anywhere near the global war that was then blazing. Of course a musical is not expected to be a grim corollary of the world around it. Especially during a war, there are more shows that try to forget reality than try to remember it. Further, when I saw the show in 1944, I wasn't at all struck by its innocence of the havoc then in the world. It's the backward look, from the perspective of today, seeing the show wrapped in its historical context, that makes it seem oddly innocent.

TO THIS NEW YORKER, DRAFT-deferred for physical reasons and thus perched to observe, the war made itself visible during the early 1940s in lots of ways, large and trivial, that scored the cortex ineradicably. What I always remember first are the uniforms. Streets, theaters, restaurants, buses, subways were filled with men and women in uniform. This was commonplace in innumerable cities and towns through the world during those years, but it was especially striking in New York, which had been transformed from the glamorous metropolis of the Western world into the American continent's busiest R&R center.

OTHER MATTERS ARE EQUALLY vivid. When I think of the war years, I think of screaming headlines—not in the tabloids, which always have them, but in *The New York Times.* Every morning the *Times* had headlines at least halfway across the front page; very often there were two or three big lines of type across the whole page. I remember thinking that the war was really over, late in 1945, when for the first time in about six years the *Times* appeared with only conventional one-column headlines on the front page. It was as if loud shouting had suddenly stopped, as if the room, the city, the world had become still, almost shockingly still.

THEN THERE WERE THE PUFFS OF smoke in Times Square. Camel cigarettes had an immense billboard there, a large head painted on it with rounded open lips forming an O. About every ten seconds a puff of steam came out of that O to signify the pleasure that the painted person was getting from a Camel. Different faces were painted around the O—a soldier or sailor or Marine—but the puffing was constant. No cigarette company today would advertise so boldly, but what makes it all the more memorable is not only that it marks the age before cigarette-phobia, but that for so many years the smoking was done by a serviceman.



OTHER ODDITIES. DRY cleaners asked you to return the wire hangers on which your clean clothes were delivered: there was a shortage. New telephones were extremely difficult to get; there were waiting lists, particularly for newlyweds and new businesses. Magazine circulation was limited by governmental allotments of paper, and it was something of a triumph to get a new subscription to certain magazines. *The New Yorker* was a particular prize. And it was *The New Yorker* that published an unforgettable cartoon of the era. Many of the New York taxis in the war years were rickety relics that would have long been retired if there had not been a shortage of civilian vehicles, and most of the oldest ones had signs in them reading, "Please Don't Slam the Door." *The New Yorker* ran a cartoon of a taxi collapsed in a heap at the curbside, with the aggrieved driver saying to a newly alighted passenger, "I *ast* ya not to slam the door."

SOME FOODSTUFFS WERE IN SHORT supply, beef especially. The armed forces had priority. No civilian suffered anything remotely like the wartime privations of, for instance, the British. Still there was enough of a beef shortage to make it an issue. People cultivated their butchers like courtiers with lords. A friend of mine, drafted into the Army and stationed in upstate New York, said that when he arrived at Grand Central Station on leave, kids would be hanging around to sneer: "Hey, buddy, gettin' enough steak?"

HOTEL ROOMS WERE EXTREMELY hard to find. Various bureaus were set up with which hotels registered their vacancies almost hourly, to help visitors, especially servicemen. Sometimes the need for a room was drastic for highly personal reasons. My wife and I knew a young woman who had a fiancé in the Navy. She lived with her family, he with his family when he was here, but they had no place in which to be alone. He had a leave coming up, and the young woman appealed to us. We gave her a key to our apartment and said that, on the appointed evening, we would go out for dinner and would go to the movies. In support of Eros, we sat through a dreary double feature and, second time around, we even sat through half the first picture again, feeling simultaneously patriotic and sly. We arrived home weary, rang the apartment bell from the lobby, and went upstairs as slowly as we could. We opened the apartment door to find that the place was undisturbed. Next day we found out that the man's leave had suddenly been canceled. I have never regretted moviegoing more than that double feature.

AS FOR WARTIME SEX, I GOT MY first glimpse of it, or a harbinger of it, a few weeks after Pearl Harbor. In late 1941 the Army found an antique anti-aircraft gun and set it up in Central Park, near where I then lived, attended by four or five teenage soldiers who might or might not have known how to operate it. For the benefit of passers-by, they tried to look battle-hardened, sucking cigarettes, sighing with boredom, spitting. As soon as word about the gun ran through the neighborhood, a half-dozen 13- and 14-year-old girls, whom I had just seen skipping rope or skating, rushed into paint and tight dresses and roosted like so many sparrows on the iron-rail fence near the gun. They tried to sound as case-hardened in their way as the soldiers. Teasings and talk followed, then dates. It was like a high school play about war, only darker, because it wasn't make-believe wartime.

NONE OF THESE MATTERS, OR ANYthing like them, is in *On the Town.* What's strange is that I didn't miss them while the war was actually going on. Reading the script recently, they seemed left out. That old nagger, history, had intervened.

**STANLEY KAUFFMANN**



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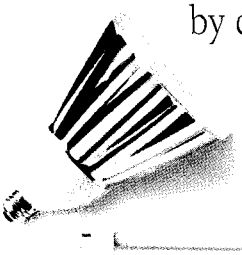

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